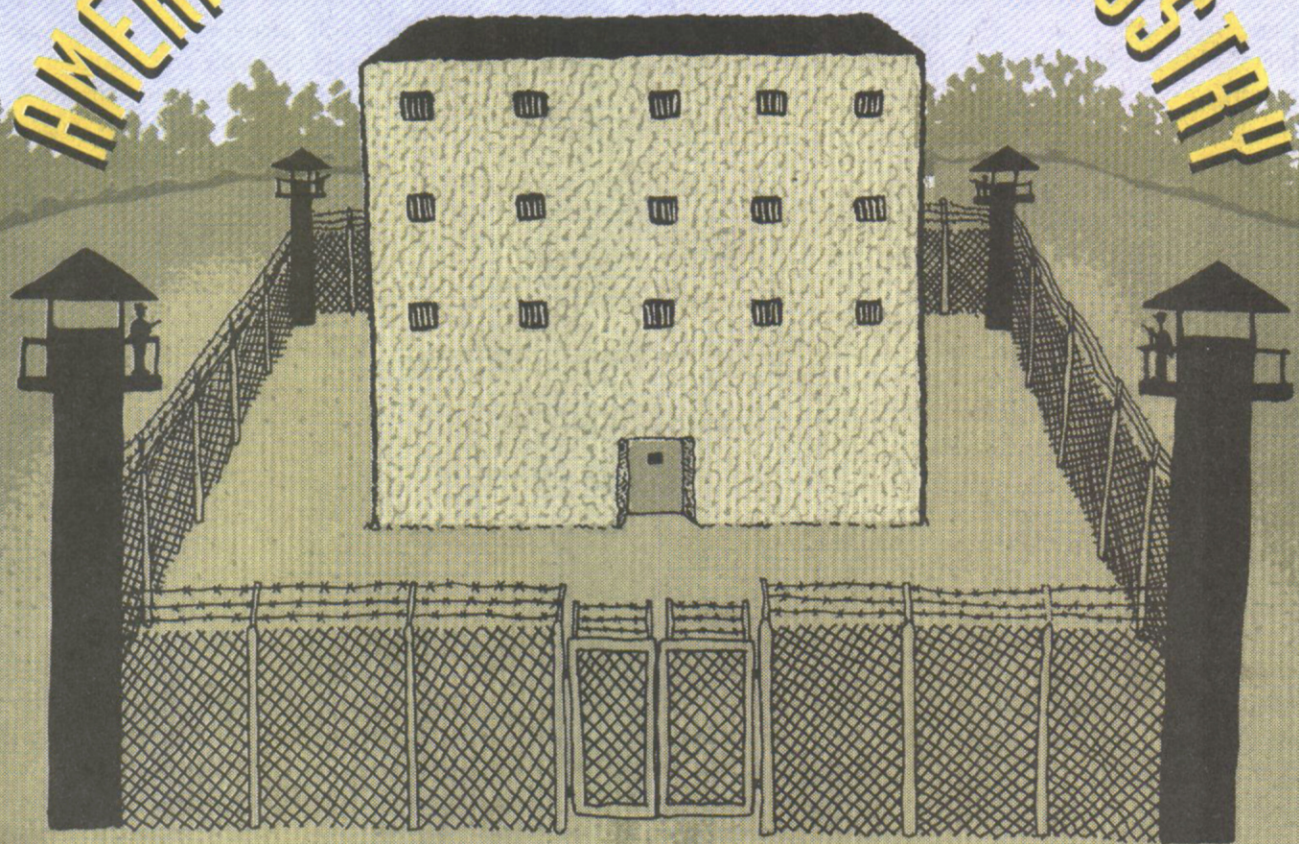


WHY THE PILOTS' DISPUTE MATTERS

March 17-30, 1997

In THESE TIMES

AMERICA'S NEWEST GROWTH INDUSTRY



\$2.50/CANADA \$3.00



**Private prisons leave
inmates at the mercy of
the bottom line.**

Kristin Bloomer reports

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITORIAL

ELECTORAL REFORM THAT WILL WORK

The immense fundraising machines that financed the 1996 electoral campaign brought the corruption of our political system to an unprecedented level. Two well-known factors are responsible for this degradation of our democracy: the prominence of television, with its elevation of individual personality above reasoned discussion, and the 1974 election-law reform, with its elevation of political action committees above parties.

The enormous expense of TV advertising has encouraged, if not forced, ambitious politicians to abandon principle and constituency in a mad scramble to finance their campaigns. No politician better illustrates this trend than Bill Clinton, who—as recent revelations confirm—surpasses all others in his uninhibited enthusiasm for squeezing money out of corporate favor-seekers and wealthy celebrity hounds.

As long as political campaigns require mountains of money, real reform of the electoral system will remain a remote possibility. That is why those most committed to democratization argue for full public financing of election campaigns.

Public financing, however, would not resolve all the problems with our current electoral system. First, the process of deciding which candidates are to receive money would be immensely complex. A commission set up to make such decisions would inevitably be controlled by those with a strong interest not only in favoring major-party candidates, but also in funding only those candidates acceptable to the establishment. This would be particularly true in primaries, which are often more important ideologically than the final elections. Second, giving money to a candidate to pay for 30-second campaign spots would do nothing to raise the level of political discourse or public education on the issues.

Perhaps most important of all, from a practical political point of view, full public financing of election campaigns does not have any chance of being enacted in this Congress. Opponents of reform would seize upon the estimated \$300

million cost of complete public financing. Already, even in the absence of mainstream proponents for campaign reform, those opposed to changing the status quo attack public financing by arguing that it would create yet another government bureaucracy and be an added burden on taxpayers.

On the other hand, requiring broadcasters to provide substantial blocks of time to qualified candidates would avoid or minimize each of these shortcomings. Such a reform would cost the public nothing. Current licensing laws would simply have to be amended to make this a condition for granting broadcasters permission to continue using our airwaves for their commercial benefit. Such a change would be perfectly legal, though pushing it through Congress would entail a fierce political struggle.

Such legislation would also solve the soundbite problem by requiring the provision of substantial blocks of time—30 minutes instead of 30 seconds. Half-hour spots would make intelligible messages possible and would favor candi-

dates who have thought deeply about relevant social-policy issues over those who merely repeat catchwords and phrases gleaned from polls and focus groups.

Finally, the law would award free airtime during both primary and general elections only to those candidates who can demonstrate some minimum level of organized popular support. If such minimum qualifications were met, broadcasting companies would be required to offer time. If they failed to do so, a candidate claiming to be qualified could then seek relief from the federal courts, not from a bureaucratic commission carrying heavy political baggage. This process might be a burden on the less affluent, but,

to level the playing field, the law could mandate that the cost of such disputes be borne by broadcasters found guilty of having violated the law's provisions.

Such a reform would, of course, be no panacea. Even if it were adopted, corporate money would still distort the democratic process. But financial clout would no longer be the decisive factor in winning elections. Moreover, political campaigns would have more substance, and therefore would attract more popular participation than they do now.

If campaigned for vigorously, this reform has as much chance of success as any of the feckless proposals now being offered by Democratic or Republican leaders. If the left fought for and promoted this reform intelligently, it could gain considerable public support and might well become law. ◀

***Broadcasters
should be required
to give free airtime
to political
candidates who can
demonstrate a
minimum level of
organized popular
support.***

IN THESE TIMES
 "...with liberty and justice for all"

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In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). Second-class postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 21, No. 9) published March 3, 1997, for newsstand sales March 17-30, 1997. (773) 772-0100. Member: Alternative Press Syndicate. The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright ©1997 by the Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Copies of *In These Times* contract with the National Writers Union are available upon request. Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI. All rights reserved. *In These Times* is indexed in both the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Publisher does not assume liability for unsolicited manuscripts or material. Manuscripts or material unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope will not be returned. All correspondence should be sent to: *In These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. E-mail: itt@igc.apc.org. For customer service and to place subscription orders, call toll free: (800) 827-0270. Advertising rates sent on request. Available back issues are \$5 each; specify volume and number. All letters received by *In These Times* become property of the newspaper. We reserve the right to print letters in condensed form.

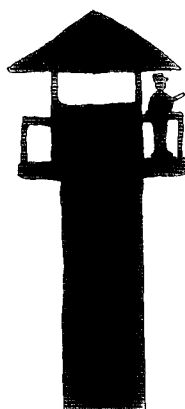


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InTHESETIMES

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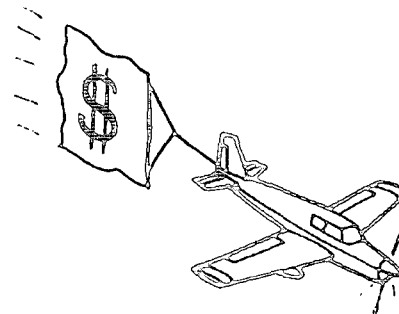
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LETTERS

He just doesn't get it

It's unfortunate that *In These Times* couldn't have entrusted the task of writing about black feminism to a black feminist. More unfortunate is the fact that Salim Muwakkil gets to weigh in on the subject ("Divided loyalties," February 17) when it's abundantly clear he has something of an ax to grind, characterizing feminist arguments as "shrill and coldly intellectual when compared to the warm religious undertones and communitarian imagery of black nationalism." Later he quotes some goofball professor to the effect that black women "desperately want patriarchy." Yes, I'm sure many poor single mothers would like to raise their children in emotional and financial partnership with their children's fathers. That, however, is not the same as "desperately" seeking patriarchy.

The real subject of the piece is black nationalism's and even more "main-

stream" black activism's hostility toward feminism, a fascinating topic indeed. So why not be up front about it? Muwakkil reveals himself early on when he expresses great surprise and shock at bell hooks' "virulent hostility" toward the Million Man March. Apparently Muwakkil is unable to comprehend a black woman's anger at being told that at a nationwide coming together of black people, her participation is not wanted or needed because the day is not for her. Is this the state of black activism today? That any event—no matter how conservative, no matter how unprogressive—that draws a crowd should be applauded?

Rhonda Reedy
Santa Monica, Calif.

AIDS raids

Jeffrey Reynolds' "Listening to protease" (February 3) glossed over a very salient event in AIDS funding battles. Last fall Republican Rep. John Porter

of Illinois and Democratic Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California reached an agreement on a much-needed \$100 million funding increase for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program. Created with the help of ACT UP/Golden Gate, ADAP assists those without Medicaid or private insurance who earn less than \$40,000 annually.

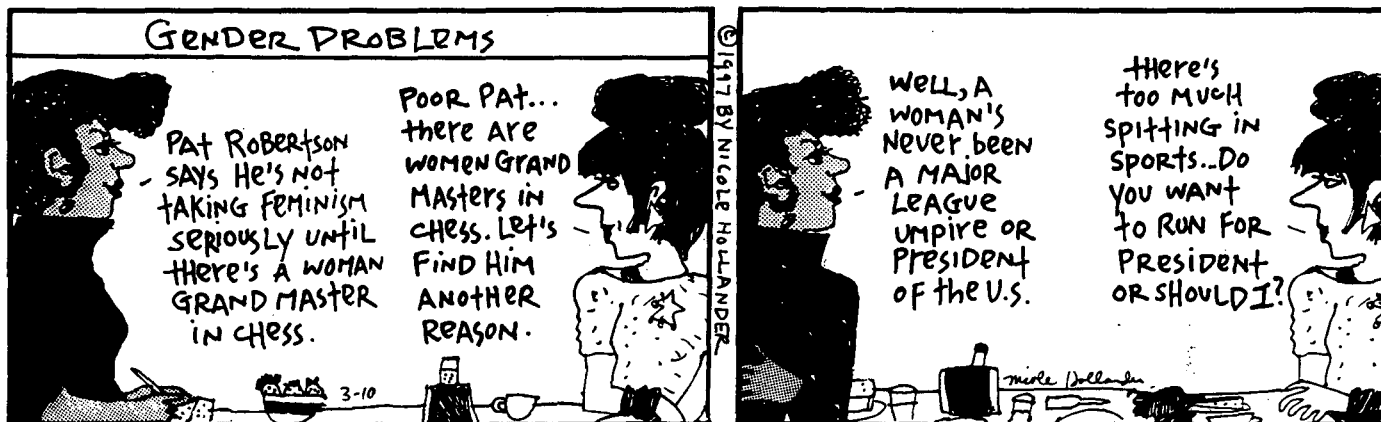
When large AIDS service organizations, such as the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and the CARE Coalition, got wind of this action, they lobbied Pelosi hard and were successful in diverting \$50 million to their agencies. This was the first time AIDS groups had raided another's pot. Past practice had been to seek a larger pie for everyone.

The results of this greed grab are now being felt by people with AIDS in the heartland. According to the *Kansas City Star*, only 132 lucky Missourians will get protease inhibitors through a special state lottery. Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, South Carolina, Vermont, Georgia and Washington, D.C., have severe ADAP waiting-list restrictions. The national ACT UP network has condemned the diversion of funds. It should be noted that ADAP is the only AIDS program not scheduled to receive an increase in Clinton's proposed 1998 budget.

Not only have protease inhibitors given us new hope, they've altered the political landscape of the AIDS community, as access to treatment options becomes a major priority. It's time for the needs of people with AIDS to supplant those of well-connected careerists

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



in self-perpetuating AIDS bureaucracies. AIDS Inc. should be lobbying for more service money and an end to drug companies' price-gouging, instead of raiding ADAP.

John Iversen
ACT UP/East Bay
Oakland, Calif.

Can't have it all

Judy Norsigian's article "Contraception blues" (February 17) brings up a few good points about why contraception is not working well in this country and the world, then drops them in favor of bemoaning the lack of the perfect contraceptive. Her article labors under the tragically out-of-touch attitudes of a dose-oriented society. Let's improve education and attitudes toward sexuality, empowerment and choice, instead of inventing some pharmaceutical gadget that so often does more harm than good.

The very idea of trying to come up with a contraceptive that "involves no muss or fuss" is ridiculous. It's like trying to invent a tiny pill that will provide your complete daily nutrition and energy. The "population-control" methods are so unsafe not only because they are not accompanied by education, but because they are not meant to be. The no-fuss chemicals and gadgets are predicated on ignorance. They are created and presented by people who believe that if only the masses had a simple trick to follow, then maybe they'd do what was good for them.

The fact is that birth control is difficult. For most women, it is a battle against some very compelling biology, and it needs to be fought with intelligence. Women are amazingly ignorant of their bodies. Teachers, doctors and others who could arm women with self-knowledge just don't trust them enough to tell them the very basic concepts of natural birth control, also called the rhythm method. Even the article didn't mention it. This is not a no-fuss method, but it is definitely "safe, effective and a pleasure to use." Used prop-

erly, it is at least 98 percent effective.

That most women I know, educated and privileged as they are, know next to nothing about their reproductive cycle is repulsive to me. Empowerment can be scary, especially to someone who is trying to change—or control—people's behavior. But only if women and men take personal responsibility, based on knowledge, will society ever change for good.

Rebecca Mattis
Arcata, Calif.



Put the money where the need is

What a perversion of the peace dividend! Cut the military budget? Yes. Give the savings to the states? No!

Vermont's "hope to ignite a nationwide movement to make the peace dividend a reality" ("Want a peace dividend?" Joel Bleifuss, February 17) would badly distort that effort by promoting a very undesirable end. Justice will not be served by promoting devolution to the states. Give the savings to all the federal economic and social programs that have been sacrificed over the past two decades to the military and to the balanced-budget mania. Give the savings to education, affordable housing, environmental protection, public-sector jobs and all the other badly needed national programs. We need a strong federal role in protecting the common good, not abdication of national responsibilities to the narrow interests of states and communities.

Bernice R. Bild
Committee for New Priorities
Chicago, Ill.

No special treatment

In her otherwise excellent article on culture versus established law, "When in Rome" (February 17), Nina Schuyler did not ask the obviously glaring question: What in the name of Cicero happened to the brains of the county clerk who did not ask for the birth certificates of the 13- and 14-year-old sister brides?

In addition, Schuyler did not adequately examine the preposterous proposition that the cultural rights of immigrants should be given any consideration when they fly in the face of the established law of the nation receiving them. Slaveholders and Mormons—our own native citizens—had to bow down to our nation's cultural dicta, so how are these newcomers so special?

Margery Gilcrest-Hesse
Lansing, Mich.

Twisted priorities

In "On the trail of deadbeat dads" (February 17), Katharine Greider should have referred to the vast number of deadbeat parents. In my line of work, I commonly deal with delinquents of both sexes.

The article was correct in linking the lack of child-support payments with children living in poverty. Adding to that tragedy are noncustodial parents willing to spend thousands of dollars to revamp visitation schedules or punish ex-spouses when they miss visits. These parents will spend paychecks on retribution, but not on their children.

Unfortunately, courts in this country are more likely to punish custodial parents for noncompliance with visitation than they are to punish deadbeats, who get payment arrangements, wage garnishments or very little jail time. Shouldn't both be treated the same? A court is not likely to go easy on a mom who, with an excuse, denied visitation to a parent with a court order. But for a missed child-support payment, you can barely hear the slap on the wrist.

Terri Andrews
The Divorced Parents X-Change
Athens, Ohio

InSHORT



ate reinstatement for large numbers of strikers. That, in turn, could force the newspapers to lay off hundreds of replacement workers hired since the strike began.

The *News* and *Free Press* are published jointly by their respective owners, Gannett and Knight-Ridder. So far, the newspapers insist that no bad-faith bargaining occurred and that the unconditional offer entitles workers only to preferential recall rights. On the eve of the offer, they scrambled to hire additional replacement workers, to ensure that it will take years for most strikers to return.

With the offer to return to their jobs, the unions acknowledged that their strike was yielding diminishing returns. The *News* and *Free Press* published every day since the strike started in July 1995. While union boycotts cost them 700,000 readers and \$250 million in losses and missed profits, the newspapers reported a modest return to profitability by the end of 1996. Meanwhile, striking workers spent less and less time on picket lines, as most found other jobs.

Why, then, didn't the unions make a return-to-work offer months ago? They delayed in part because of the odious conditions such an offer imposes. Returning to work without a contract and without the ability to arbitrate grievances was a bitter pill for union members who'd made great sacrifices during the strike. Union politics also complicated matters. Teamsters President Ron Carey had privately favored a return-to-work

Detroit unions shift gears

On February 14, six unions made an unconditional offer to return to work at the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*. By so doing, the unions ended their 20-month strike—if one defines a strike in its narrow legal sense as a voluntary withholding of labor. The unions did not, however, end their fight for survival and new contracts.

By offering to return to work, the striking workers became eligible for back pay, starting on the day of the offer—provided the National Labor Relations Board proves that the newspapers caused the strike through bad-faith bargaining. That back pay could cost the newspapers hundreds of thousands of dollars a day. Also, in the aftermath of the offer, the NLRB is expected to seek a federal court injunction ordering immedi-

offer for many months. He felt he couldn't openly push for it, however, until after he defeated James Hoffa in last December's election for the Teamsters presidency.

On a deeper level, the Detroit strike illustrates how slowly unions sometimes react to change. On the night before the strike, a Teamsters spokesperson boasted to reporters, "Soon there won't be a single truck moving out of those gates." He wasn't alluding to an actual plan to shut down distribution. Like many strikers, he was simply convinced that unions couldn't be busted in the Motor City.

The question now is how much critical mass remains in Detroit. Will the Detroit strikers match the success of the United Steelworkers, who were sufficiently mobilized to

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negotiate a contract with Bridgestone/Firestone in December, 19 months after a return-to-work offer? Or will they suffer along with the United Auto Workers, who have yet to negotiate a contract with Caterpillar 15 months after they returned to work?

The Detroit strikers have certainly been bloodied, but they're continuing their rallies and boycotts. They successfully lobbied the AFL-CIO to schedule a national mobilization and march in Detroit on June 13 and 14. The Teamsters and other unions, meanwhile, are expanding their campaign to pressure Knight-Ridder and Gannett on a nationwide basis.

—John Lippert

Russia's nuclear time bomb

Nuclear crisis in the heart of a giant metropolis sounds like science fiction, but experts warn it could happen at a crumbling, cash-starved Moscow research center that bristles with atomic reactors.

The Kurchatov Institute, a formerly secret scientific enclave wedged between apartment blocks in northwestern Moscow, was the birthplace of the Soviet Union's atomic-weapons program and a key center of nuclear experimentation for almost half a century. But a dramatic financial crunch, combined with plummeting morale among Kurchatov's 7,000 chronically unpaid workers, has turned the institute's seven functioning nuclear reactors and several tons of ill-protected radioactive waste into an ecological time bomb.

"We are on the horns of a particularly terrible dilemma," says Andrei Gagarinsky, Kurchatov's director of public relations. "We can no longer afford to safely operate our nuclear reactors, but we have no money to shut them down properly either."

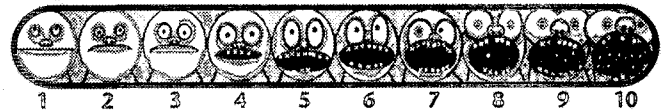
Once the command center of the Soviet Union's vast nuclear establishment, Kurchatov's funding has been radically slashed in recent years by a nearly bankrupt Russian government. Gagarinsky says the institute received barely a third of the \$30 million budgeted for it in 1996, and the trickle of government money has almost dried up this winter. "Most of our workers haven't been paid since October," he says. "People continue working from love of science or sense of duty, but that can't go on forever."

The institute's sprawling grounds are littered with trash, rusting equipment and unfinished construction. Buildings that house atomic material are unguarded, and employees often don't show up for work. One research worker, who asked not to be named, says safety standards have sharply declined and that only the most vital maintenance work is still being performed on Kurchatov's nuclear equipment. She says workers are often asked to take their contaminated

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APPALL-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES



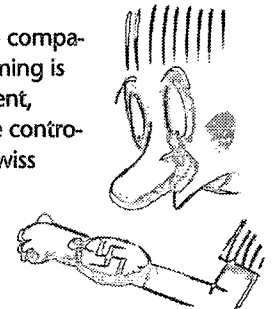
By David Putrelle

Bite me 72

London's *Daily Telegraph* reports that a former Catholic-school headmaster charged with repeated sexual assault of young boys told a jury "that he considered it normal to bite boys' bottoms." Brother Cyril, who described himself in court as a "lesser-spotted bottom biter," explained that the bites were part of a bedtime wrestling game he played with the boys, and that his playful nips to the butt simply indicated that the boys should break their holds on him. "I would nip a bottom to make them move," he explained. "It was an act about which nobody complained—spirits were high on a Saturday."

Good as gold 73

As the folks at the Swatch watch company should know all too well, timing is everything. In a recent advertisement, apparently put together before the controversy over stolen Jewish assets in Swiss banks erupted, the company proudly proclaimed: "As always, whenever there is gold, a good part of it ends up in Switzerland."

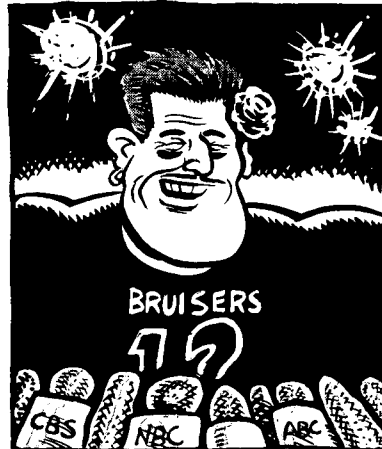
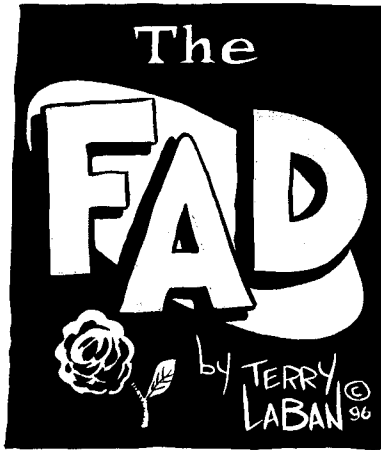


Whip Inflation Now, Part XXII 74

One of the pesky drawbacks of a healthy economy is that it tends to improve worker morale. And when workers start to feel perky, they ask for raises—something they don't do quite so often when they're afraid of being tossed out on their asses. As the *Wall Street Journal* recently reported, wage increases ("though still moderate") are starting to worry inflation-phobic folks like Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan, who, as the *Journal* notes dryly, "has argued that worker insecurity is a powerful force in keeping compensation inflation in check." Some employers are worried as well. Chad Stewart, president of a Las Vegas construction firm, told the *Journal* that he's had to agree to pick up half the costs of his employees' health insurance—and even start a pension plan. "These two things alone will add \$1 million a year to my costs," he explained. "A few years ago, I didn't think these things mattered to my guys."

High-tech solutions to age-old problems 23

At last the Japanese don't have to worry about grandpapa-san wandering off into the streets of Tokyo. According to The Associated Press, scientists at a Tokyo research center have proposed keeping track of navigationally impaired oldsters with Global Positioning System technology, which uses satellites to locate users carrying special transmitting devices. According to the AP, researcher Toshiaki Kurouchi "came up with the idea when constant worry about several elderly relatives and friends began to bother him at work."



Continued from page 7

suits home and wash them there, because the institute can no longer afford a special laundry service.

"Nuclear reactors require round-the-clock supervision, but how do you ask people who haven't been paid for four months to stay up all night?" says Gagarinsky.

Some of Kurchatov's activities have attracted foreign funding, such as the famous Tokomak nuclear-fusion project and research aimed at converting former Soviet nuclear-weapons facilities to peaceful purposes. But the bulk of its traditional work, including supplying radiological clinics and servicing nuclear-power stations across Russia, must be done on a shoestring. And the institute recently disclosed that some 60,000 tons of highly radioactive nuclear waste left over from the Stalin-era atomic-bomb project was buried in decaying concrete containers on its grounds.

"This is our legacy, I'm afraid," Gagarinsky says. "The main problem is to keep ground water from seeping into the containers, which we are fighting every day to do. Ideally, the waste should be moved to a safer storage site, but that would be prohibitively expensive."

About 10 million people live in the Moscow area, within a 30-kilometer radius of the Kurchatov Institute.

"In principle, it is downright dangerous to locate nuclear reactors and store large amounts of radioactive material inside a large city, even in the best of conditions," says Eduard Gismatullin, a nuclear expert with Greenpeace Russia. "But these are far from good conditions. The system of control at the Kurchatov Institute is unraveling. Skilled staff are leaving in droves, and those who remain are very unhappy. Unless something radical is done, and quickly, it is a very bad accident waiting to happen."

—Fred Weir

Licensed to lick

MARY FOGARTY, A 36-YEAR-OLD BRITISH WOMAN, CLAIMS SHE WAS fired from her job at the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service office at the American Embassy in London after she complained that her boss, a

U.S. diplomat and CIA officer, had made obscene remarks and licked her ear. An industrial tribunal awarded Fogarty £12,000 in damages. But she'll have a hard time collecting: The U.S. Embassy has invoked diplomatic immunity.

—Joel Bleifuss



Rudy's wrecking ball

New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani doesn't like squatters. He calls them "cheaters" and "chiselers," and apparently will go to any length to get rid of them—even if it means violating safety codes and orders from the state Supreme Court.

After fire damaged a building occupied by squatters on East Fifth Street in Manhattan's East Village on February 9, Giuliani saw his chance to act. On the following morning, the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) released a statement calling the building "in imminent danger of collapse," and a waiting crane began demolition.

Going to extremes

BIPARTISANSHIP MAY APPEAL TO THOSE WITHOUT COURAGE OR CONVICTIONS, BUT IT IS NO WAY TO WIN ELECTIONS.

Leonard Williams and Neil Wollman, professors at Manchester College in Indiana, studied the 1994 and 1996 congressional elections and concluded that incumbents with defined ideologies—both left and right—did better than their more moderate counterparts. Using the rating scales of the Americans for Democratic Action and the American Conservative Union as guideposts, the researchers found that in the Republican landslide of 1994, "moderate Democratic incumbents were more likely to lose their bids for re-election than were liberal ones." In that election, liberal Democrats were re-elected 93 percent of the time and moderate Democrats 75 percent. Similarly, in the 1996 election, in which House Republicans lost ground, conservative Republican incumbents stood a better chance of being re-elected than more moderate ones. This tendency to re-elect ideological "extremists" was even more apparent in hotly contested marginal districts where neither party holds a clear advantage. The writers conclude, "Contrary to today's conventional wisdom, the voters seem more comfortable with those on either side of the street than with those in the middle of the road." —J.B.

Critics charge, however, that the building wasn't seriously damaged. John Shuttleworth, an architect and local Community Board member who observed the demolition, says he could find "no major deformations" in the building. The People's Mutual Housing Association, a development company that had been scheduled to take over the building from HPD for renovation, still considered the project viable, according to its architect Peter Woll. Even city Buildings Department architect Michael Sieburt admitted that the emergency was exaggerated, calling the demolition a "discretionary takedown."

In their haste, city workers began tearing down the building without taking steps to contain asbestos, lead and dust, as required by state and federal regulations. Nor did they secure the adjoining building—which ended up with a gaping hole in an exterior wall—or inform its residents of the demolition.

That evening, after demolition had begun, state Supreme Court Justice Barbara Kapnick ordered the city to cease pending a hearing. When the city ignored the order, Kapnick issued a second one the following afternoon, adding a prohibition against removing residents' belongings without permission. This, too, was ignored. The building's residents watched as dump trucks carried away rubble mixed with almost everything they owned.

According to Jackie Bukowski, a lawyer for the squatters, the city neither appealed nor moved to vacate either of the orders. When she pleaded with Police Captain Primo Flores of the 9th Precinct to enforce the orders, he replied, "The Department of Buildings, they have their own orders."

The city acquired hundreds of abandoned buildings in the East Village during the '70s, and squatters often moved in and rehabilitated them. Now that the neighborhood has become trendy enough to attract investment, Giuliani wants HPD to sell its properties—and he's shown a willingness to go to any extreme to clear out the squatters. In 1995, he sent riot cops, helicopters, sharpshooters and a 50,000-



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pound tank to smash down an 11-year-old squat—a stunt state Supreme Court Justice Elliot Wilk criticized for creating "mayhem."

"The Giuliani administration sees this as exclusively a law-enforcement issue" says Norman Siegel, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union. "This is a sledgehammer solution. If you rip the buildings down, the issue is moot—there's no longer anything to fight over."

Bukowski has filed motions for a contempt-of-court ruling from Kapnick. "Apparently the Giuliani administration feels it can operate outside the law," Bukowski says. "It can't."

—Robin Shulman

Labor's next move

With the election season over, and having thoroughly restructured the top brass at the AFL-CIO, President John Sweeney's team is turning in earnest to its paramount mission: organizing new union members. "Unless we first put an emphasis on growth, none of our other strategies work," Sweeney said at the winter meeting of the labor federation's executive council.

Symbolizing the new emphasis, the executive council moved last month's meeting from its traditional Florida

Pigs in sheep's clothing

THE NATIONAL PORK PRODUCERS COUNCIL (NPPC) HAS SPENT \$48,000 IN MANDATORY MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS TO monitor groups that oppose the accelerating consolidation and concentration of hog farming. According to internal NPPC documents leaked to Alan Guebert, an agriculture journalist from Illinois, the council hired the PR firm Mongoven, Biscoe and Duchin in 1996 to investigate six family-farm and sustainable-agriculture organizations, many of whose members fund the NPPC each time they sell a hog. John Stauber, editor of *PR Watch*, describes Mongoven, Biscoe and Duchin as the pre-eminent "spies for hire" of the PR industry. In the early '90s, the firm mounted an extensive covert operation against consumer advocates who opposed the FDA's approval of Monsanto's bovine growth hormone. Despite appearances to the contrary, NPPC spokesperson Charles Harness told Guebert, "This is not an enemies list." —J.B.

resort to Los Angeles, where several hot organizing drives are underway. More important, the council invited scores of union members to tell the assembled labor leaders and politicians their stories of trying to form unions despite unfavorable laws and hostile employers. Workers at Avondale Shipyards, a Navy contractor in New Orleans, told of their plight: It took nearly four years simply to count the ballots that certified a majority of workers wanted a union, and the company still refuses to negotiate. Meanwhile, Avondale charges the government for its union-fighting expenses.

Such stories elicited an unusually passionate defense of unions from Vice President Al Gore, who announced that the administration would deny federal contracts to companies that flout labor laws and would also prohibit government agencies from reimbursing contractors for the costs of running anti-union campaigns. "The right to organize is a fundamental right in America, but it is a right that too often is violated," Gore said, "The president and I stand on the side of working men and women who want to exercise their right to organize."

Unions don't expect Congress to reform labor law in their favor any time soon, but AFL-CIO organizing director Richard Bensinger wants unions to use their political clout to support organizing—for example, by demanding that politicians they backed openly support workers' rights to organize. In Las Vegas, the Hotel and Restaurant Employees union (HERE) is trying to get the government to lift the gaming license of a labor scofflaw, the Frontier casino, whose workers have been on strike for five years to gain union recognition. HERE may also use its powerful role as a bargainer for health insurance to reinforce the Service Employees drive for a union at Las Vegas hospitals.

The AFL-CIO's principal role will be to encourage similar innovation and coordination among affiliates. The federation's new Department of Corporate Affairs will help target promising regions or sectors for broad-based organizing. The new Department of Field Mobilization is trying to reinvigorate often moribund municipal central labor councils, starting with the mobilization of support for 5,000 strawberry pickers whom the United Farm Workers are trying to organize. The AFL-CIO's new Office of Investment prompted pension funds to criticize executive pay policies at the

Disney Corp., which is under attack for using overseas sweatshops.

The AFL-CIO hopes to set an example for individual unions by devoting 30 percent of its budget to organizing, including a \$10 million fund to subsidize innovative organizing projects. If all unions, at local and national levels, boosted their organizing funds from the typical 5 percent of their budget to 30 percent, they could plow \$1.5 billion into organizing.

Not all of the federation's new initiatives will bear fruit. An early effort to get the Laborers and the United Food and Commercial Workers to cooperate on poultry organizing is already unraveling. But a new Hart Research poll for the AFL-CIO shows growing distrust of management among Americans and sympathy with unions. The time seems ripe for a real resurgence of labor, if unions can overcome their internal conflicts and resistance to the profound changes needed to make organizing succeed.

—David Moberg

CONTRIBUTORS

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THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



T H E F I R S T S T O N E

SNAKE OIL

By Joel Bleifuss

Last November's Public Relations Society of America conference revolved around the theme of "Telling the Truth: Building Credibility in an Incredible World." Of course, in the world of PR, sometimes the best way to build a client's credibility is to discredit his opponent.

PR firms can overwhelm public-interest opposition with multimillion dollar campaigns designed to manipulate public perceptions. A blueprint for one such campaign was presented at a conference workshop entitled "Identifying Trends and Issues Management in the Food and Beverage Industry." The discussion focused on how to discredit the Washington-based Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI).

Panel participants explained that the food industry needed a coordinated plan to generate negative media coverage of CSPI. But for such a campaign to succeed, panelists explained, the affected corporate interests—in this case, the National Restaurant Association and Procter & Gamble—must not appear to be orchestrating it.

CSPI was founded in 1971 by three protégés of Ralph Nader. The center now has 50 employees and an annual budget of \$13 million, three-quarters of which comes from the 800,000 subscribers to the group's newsletter, *Nutrition Action*. Under the leadership of Michael Jacobson, the group has blossomed into the nation's foremost proponent of healthy eating. In the process, it has made enemies.

Thanks to CSPI, the restaurant industry has found its fat-laden fare in the public spotlight. For example, CSPI's laboratory analysis discovered that a mushroom cheeseburger with fried onion rings, like that served in chains like TGIFridays, contains about 1,800 calories and as much fat as that in five strips of bacon, four chocolate-frosted donuts, three slices of pepperoni pizza, two banana splits and a Big Mac combined.

More recently, CSPI has threatened the bottom line of corporate food-giant Procter & Gamble by criticizing Olestra, a fat substitute that fries like oil, tastes like oil, but

contains no calories because the human body does not recognize it as a food. Procter & Gamble has spent an estimated \$1 billion to develop this fake fat, marketed under the name Olean. Yet no amount of money can change the fact that for some consumers, Olestra leads to gastrointestinal distress, including what a confidential and proprietary Frito-Lay report calls "anal oil leakage." According to that report, one study found that 5 percent of people who ate Frito-Lay's Olestra-fried Max chips suffered "underwear spotting."

Panel speaker Jeff Prince, an independent PR consultant for the food industry, has spent many years battling the group he calls "the megabeast of science hype." Prince told conference participants that the food industry keeps a close watch on CSPI by deploying spies in enemy territory.

"The way we have been able to respond [to CSPI] is that we have inside information. You have to, otherwise you can't respond," he explained.

"The restaurant industry needs to be concerned," said Prince, because eventually CSPI's nutritional information will lead to "a decline in consumer confidence, a growing sense of guilt about eating out." To counteract the CSPI message, the National Restaurant Association, under Prince's guidance, has developed a three-part strategy.

First, said Prince, the industry has stressed that consumers are already provided with "variety and choice." Studies show that only 31 percent of restaurantgoers are concerned about nutrition when they eat out, and restaurants cater to these customers by offering low-fat items. Second, restaurants have promoted the idea that the CSPI is the "food police." The industry, said Prince, tried peddling other pejoratives for CSPI's consumer activists, such as "nutrition terrorists" and "food nudniks," but for some reason these didn't catch on. The third tactic employed by the restaurant industry is to raise questions about the accuracy of CSPI's science. This final tactic has been underutilized, said Prince. He called on all affected industries to undertake "a concerted effort" to help "the media understand how CSPI abuses science."

One of the key instances of such abuse, according to Prince, is the center's position on Olestra, which was based on a "flimsy and flawed study that CSPI has pitted against Procter & Gamble's 25 years of research." What Prince failed to mention, however, is that Procter & Gamble's own research shows that in addition to causing diarrhea, Olestra prevents the body from absorbing carotenoids, nutrients thought to reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease.

Prince proposed that the food industry "chip away at CSPI's credibility" by using Olestra as a prime example of how CSPI has misused science. But he warned it would not be wise for the affected industries to approach the media

directly. "If it is the National Restaurant Association and Procter & Gamble out there making the case, nobody is going to believe them. Their ox has been gored," Prince said. "What I am talking about is doing briefings behind the scenes to educate the media, and you would have to distance it from interested companies."

He continued: "The companies and industries that wish to undermine [CSPI's] credibility can best do so by working together to make a case that is partially removed from their own immediate interests. The whole project would require considerable scientific expertise. It would require considerable skill in media management. It would require almost infinite tact, but through a concerted effort I think it could be done. ... It may well be a job for some currently under-



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funded organization, or perhaps for some new organization. But it seems to me the food industry ought to get together and get this job done soon."

Prince then got down to the nitty-gritty: "We would need well-written, objective backgrounders. We would need expert testimony, perhaps even a panel. We would need to win the support of media critics ... who criticize media performance. We'd need their support, and I think we could get it."

Prince said executives at Disney Corp.'s ABC are receptive to his arguments. "I know for a fact that ABC has been debating over and over again whether to cut out CSPI as a source or not," said Prince. "They have come to me several times to discuss it."

On the other hand, Marian Burros, the food writer for the

New York Times, "has a problem," said Prince. "She has quoted and cited and backed CSPI in everything it has ever said since the year one to the year now, and she has misquoted and miscited anybody who says anything in response."

In the four months since Prince's November 12 presentation at the St. Louis conference, Procter & Gamble has initiated a well-orchestrated PR campaign against CSPI using pliant journalists.

On December 1, the *Detroit News* published an op-ed piece on the misdeeds of "the 'food police,' who pursue an agenda while failing to teach what a healthy diet is." The article was written by Sarah Durkin and Hames Plumer of Consumer Alert, a right-wing anti-consumer organization based in Washington, D.C. Besides being a vicious attack on CSPI, the article doubles as ad copy for Procter & Gamble's Olestra, which they praise to the sky.

On December 30, *New Republic* associate editor Stephen Glass entered the fray with an article headlined "The Fat Police Go Wacky." Glass, who came to the magazine by way of the Heritage Foundation, belittles CSPI for trying "to discredit pro-Olestra scientists by claiming they were connected to industry." In making his case against CSPI, he quotes Dr. David Allison, a member of the nutritional advisory board of Nabisco, which could well become one of the major users of Olestra.

In a letter to the editor, Kathleen O'Reilly, the chair of CSPI's board of directors, responded: "We, indeed, have questioned the credibility of the FDA's Olestra-review committee because so many of its members have ties to industry. That committee voted 17-5 to support the approval of Olestra. At least nine of the 17 who favored Olestra have consulted for or received grants from the food industry, a fact that many readers might have found interesting."

The March issue of *Reader's Digest* contains the most recent attempt to discredit the group. In "Attack of the Food Police," staff writer Daniel Levine discusses CSPI's campaign against Olestra, concluding, "In its ongoing attack on Olestra, CSPI has crossed the line." Levine's article sounds like it could have been written by the public-relations professionals at Procter & Gamble, which last year spent \$9 million advertising its products in *Reader's Digest*.

In its February 15 issue, *Restaurant Business* magazine quotes Prince as saying, "There's no conspiracy." He claims that he had forgotten all about his talk to the Public Relations Society of America until CSPI began quoting it.

Michael Jacobson, CSPI's executive director, has little doubt what is going on. "I have no proof that Procter & Gamble or their PR firms have been going from journalist to journalist trying to peddle this story," says Jacobson. "But you don't need to be a brain surgeon to figure out that Procter & Gamble is behind this."

After all, the job of the public-relations professional is to transform sows' ears into silk purses—or, in the case of Procter & Gamble's PR minions, to convince pliable journalists that Olestra is a dietetic breakthrough, not a breakthrough diarrhetic.

P R I S O N S

America's newest growth industry

With incarceration rates soaring, it was only a matter of time before entrepreneurs sniffed out a new business opportunity.

By Kristin Bloomer
LOCKHART, TEXAS

Thirty miles south of Austin on Texas Highway 183, past dozens of dusty, hardscrabble towns that boomed and then busted with the state's petroleum industry, one town named Lockhart is on the rebound.

The source of newfound prosperity, residents say, is the Lockhart Renaissance and Work Facility, the town's fourth largest employer. Located on Industrial Boulevard next to a machine shop, cookie factory and clothing maker, the flat-roofed, blue-and-white business looks a lot like an upscale Wal-Mart. Its neat, well-lit parking lot reserves spots for "Employee of the Month" and a few CEOs.

A secretary at the front desk invites me to wait in a plush chair in the large, white-tiled lobby while well-dressed men and women—members of the firm's 150-person work force—pass through glass

double doors to the building's interior. Eventually, a businessman named Greg Skeens walks out and introduces himself with a firm handshake.

Dressed in a crisp white shirt and silk tie, Skeens looks like an IBM executive. But he's not. He's the warden of this private, minimum-security prison run by Wackenhut Corrections Corp.

Lockhart residents boast that the prison, which holds 500 women and 500 men, has turned the town into an "international hub." Skeens gives at least one tour a month; his guests have included the home secretary of Great Britain and officials from Japan, Puerto Rico, Canada and the Navajo Tribal Council.

From the lobby, Skeens walks visitors through a series of controlled doors to the men's side of the prison. The wide central hall is bustling with inmates; a long line extends out the open door of the barber shop. Across the hall, prisoners pore over books in the law library, while in another nearby room, a group of about 20 inmates

bow in Muslim midday worship. In large "living areas," several prisoners watch a silent TV with headphones plugged into "listening tables."

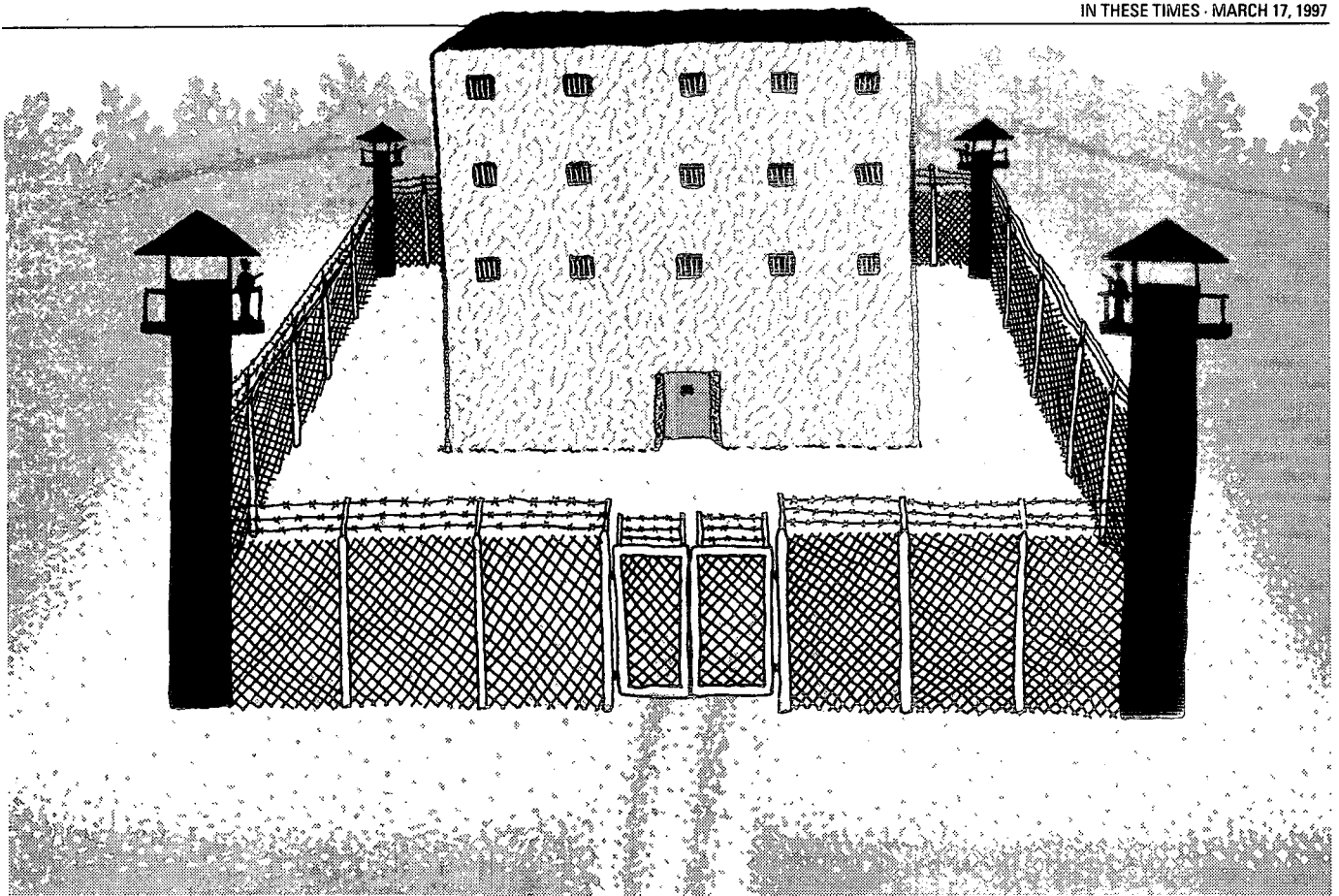
"It's just like a small community," Skeens remarks with a smile. "We have a lot of talented people locked up in the state of Texas."

For the service of housing each inmate—most of whom are here for nonviolent offenses—the state of Texas pays Wackenhut about \$27 per day. Out of that, Skeens pays for everything "from housing and hygiene items to salary and utilities to any instructional materials." Any money left over is profit.

Business is booming for private prison operators like Wackenhut these days. While crime rates have remained fairly steady over the past 20 years, the number of people behind bars in the United States has tripled to 1.63 million, according to the Justice Department. Tougher penalties, especially for drug-related offenses, explain part of this growth. But the prison industry itself has also become a big player; it needs prisoners to keep it growing. The cost of building and operating prisons has jumped from \$6.8 billion in 1980 to \$30 billion today. Spending on corrections at the state level has increased faster than any other category of public spending, and an increasing proportion of this money goes to private companies.

Towns used to sue to keep prisons out. Now—in competition for jobs, tax revenue, utility connections and, in some cases, per-inmate payments—they're fighting to attract them. In Texas last year, several towns stampeded for 12 new state lockups; some offered free country-club memberships to the top officials of any prison that came to town.

In 1995, the Austin-based Bobby Ross Group built a



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480-bed, medium-security prison in Karnes City, Texas. The state of Colorado now warehouses more than 470 of its convicts at the Karnes County Corrections Center at a cost of about \$41 per day per prisoner. Of that amount, Karnes County government gets 25 cents per day per prisoner—for a total of about \$26,000 last year. “It sounded too good to be true to have a prison built without taxpayer money,” says Karnes County Judge Alfred Pawelek. “The bottom line was we needed jobs. J-O-B-S. ... We were looking at empty classrooms if we didn’t do something.”

Last year, Romulus, N.Y., with a population of 3,000, voted by a 3-1 margin in favor of hosting a new state prison. The town is now a finalist in a 22-town competition for one of three state prisons to be built at a total cost of \$476 million. “The red carpet is out,” town Supervisor Raymond Zajack says. “With the number of prisoners growing, it’s a lucrative business, so to speak.” Towns in Missouri, Washington, Florida and Virginia have also been clamoring for prisons to build in their backyards.

In a climate like this, it’s no surprise that some entrepreneurs have sniffed out the possibility of making a buck. So far, private prisons incarcerate only about 50,000 prisoners—a small fraction of the total inmate population. But these private prisons have grown at four times the rate of public prisons, and experts predict their numbers will triple by the year 2000, with revenues topping \$1 billion. The two largest companies, Wackenhut and Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), together own about 75 percent of the

global market share.

Proponents of private prisons say companies like Wackenhut cut costs by 10 percent to 15 percent. “If I need something and it’s at Wal-Mart, I can go to Wal-Mart and buy it,” Skeens says. “I have a little more flexibility (than the state).”

Such savings have yet to be proved. The U.S. General Accounting Office reported in August 1996 that “comparisons of operational costs (between public and private institutions) indicated little difference and/or mixed results.” For one thing, private prisons shift significant costs to the state. If an inmate at Wackenhut needs to be hospitalized, Skeens pays for the first 72 hours and the state pays the rest. Prisoners are screened for mental and physical health before being admitted—leaving costly prisoners in state lockups.

Nor is there any assurance that private companies will treat inmates adequately, even by the abysmal standards of public prisons. Government oversight of private prisons is lax. While most states require that private prisons be accredited by the American Correctional Association, critics say that ACA standards are minimal at best and that, even so, many private prisons fail to meet them. Most states require on-site, state-employed monitors to ensure contract compliance. Some states also require periodic site visits from independent boards. But these measures have failed to stem the abuse of inmates in private prisons.

In the competition to offer the best prisons at the lowest cost, prison companies sometimes skimp on food, rehabilitative programs or training for guards. One privately run

detention center for illegal immigrants in Elizabeth, N.J., exploded in violence in June 1995 after Esmor Correctional Services Inc. hired inexperienced staff, served inmates a substandard diet and shackled detainees in leg irons. The Immigration and Naturalization Service center reopened last month under the management of CCA.

In 1995, allegations of rape and assault at the privately run High Plains Youth Center in Brush, Colo., prodded the state to admit it could not guarantee inmates' safety at private prisons. Run by the Rebound Corp. in Denver, the 180-bed juvenile facility houses youths from more than two dozen states.

In December 1995, officials from the University of Illinois at Chicago made a surprise visit to the juvenile lockup, where they documented "a consistent and disturbing pattern of violence, sexual abuse, clinical malpractice and administrative incompetence at every level of the program." One teen-age boy who had been sexually assaulted by another resident told investigators that when he had pounded on a locked door for help, staff told him to "just get back in bed." His attacker serially raped the boy for months, while the staff deliberately ignored it, the Universi-

ty of Illinois report found.

According to Jerry Adamek, director of Colorado's Division of Youth Corrections, the state had started in October 1995 to "negotiate" with Rebound about the unacceptable conditions. To date, the state hasn't removed a single youth from the facility.

Adamek, a proponent of prison privatization, acknowledged that the state's level of tolerance for Rebound was a result of its dependence on the company. "We were so desperate for beds even here in Colorado, we lowered some of our own levels of expectation," Adamek says. "The monitors knew if we went in and were too aggressive with it, we had the possibility of losing the contract provider."

The Colorado ACLU has sued the Bobby Ross Group, charging delayed access to medical care, overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, inexperienced and undertrained staff, and inadequate programs and services at its private prison in Karnes City.

Bobby Ross—a former Texas county sheriff—and his spokespeople refused to respond to the allegations. They also refused to distribute my letters to inmates. They returned the letters—opened—and ran me off the property

A captive labor force

The guards aren't the only people employed at the Lockhart prison.

Past air-conditioned corporate offices that prisoners built themselves, about 150 male convicts make air-conditioner valves for Chatleff Controls Inc. and circuit boards for Lockhart Technologies Inc.

These jobs were once held by 150 workers in Austin. But in 1995, LTI laid those workers off and transferred the jobs here. The company gets cheap labor—it pays workers minimum wage and doesn't have to provide benefits or vacations—and cheap rent of \$1 a year.

Men sit under work lamps, peering through microscopes and magnifying glasses at circuit-board parts. Some solder the parts on a "touch-up line"; others check for missing pieces. Each prisoner collects about 85 cents an hour from his paychecks. The rest goes to victims' compensation, taxes, family support and the prisoner's own room and board.

Prison labor, which exists in public and private prisons alike, is yet another lucrative enterprise in the prison business, netting a total of \$1.8 billion in 1995. Years ago, prisoners made nothing but license plates and furniture for state office buildings. Today, in 30 of the 50 states, they make a gamut of goods for the open market.

Inmates in Vermont, for instance, make snowshoes for Stowe Canoe and Snowshoe Co. Prisoners in California raise pigs for D.R. Ranch of Avenal. Oregon Prison Industries, which goes by the name of UniGroup, markets a line of convict-made blue jeans called "Prison Blues," selling back to the public the very "gangsta" culture it claims to crack down on through the criminal-justice system.

At Lockhart, Leonard Hilt, LTI's soft-spoken controller and former president, says he enjoys having "a captive work force." "They're here every day," Hilt says. "Their cars don't break down, they're rarely ill, and they don't have family problems. ... They're delightful to work with."

Many prison reformers favor prison labor because it teaches inmates marketable skills. Linda Marin, executive director of Texas-CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants), says programs like Lockhart's are an improvement over the state's tradition of forcing prisoners to work without pay. "If there's a means for them to earn money and get benefits—getting to work on time, having their work valued—that's a good thing," Marin says.

Sitting in the touch-up line at Lockhart with his name stenciled across the back of his undershirt, Rickey Davis says he likes the program because it lets him "better himself." "You can pretty much get yourself established for your release," says Davis, who is serving time on a cocaine charge. "You get a chance to send your kids some money out of your check." He can also earn "good time" off his sentence.

Not all inmates apply for the jobs, however. "I'm not going to work to pay the state to send me to prison," says Howard

when I appeared in person to request a visit.

Since the prisons are on private property, the Texas Department of Corrections has its hands tied when it comes to protecting prisoners' First Amendment rights in such cases, according to Glen Castlebury, a spokesperson for the Texas Department of Corrections. "There's no regulation whatsoever of the private prisons (in these matters)," he says. "They're scot-free to do whatever they please."

Despite documented abuses and dubious savings, it will be difficult to slow the momentum of private prisons, which have become a political force to be reckoned with. CCA and Wackenhut together gave almost \$150,000 in federal and state political contributions during the 1995-96 electoral cycle, according to reports filed with the Federal Election Commission. The companies gave mostly to Republicans, but they also hedged their bets by giving money to pliant Democrats. Having promised to reduce the federal payroll substantially, many Democrats, including Bill Clinton, support prison privatization.

Some of Wall Street's largest investment houses, including Goldman Sachs & Co. and Smith Barney Inc., are competing to underwrite the bonds for the prisons. (See "Jail-

house stock," by Ken Silverstein, page 18.) Other huge companies also have a stake. American Express, for example, invested approximately \$31 million in the \$38 million Great Plains Correctional Facility in Hinton, Okla., according to the prison's warden, Tom Martin. Great Plains is a private prison that houses inmates from North Carolina.

Prison companies also buy lobbying power. Rodney Blonien, a powerful California lobbyist and former corrections official, was paid more than \$600,000 by a variety of corrections clients between 1989 and 1994, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Wackenhut alone paid him \$220,260 during that period, the newspaper reported.

Private prison companies have some powerful allies in the fight for stiffer sentences and more prison spending. For example, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, which has grown from 4,000 to 23,000 in the last decade, gave more than \$1 million to various California state politicians in 1996. The prison lobby is also supported by the National Rifle Association. Armed with an agenda of deflecting public fear away from guns and toward people, the NRA successfully lobbies for prison construction and three-strikes-and-you're-out laws. (See "The NRA strikes

Zephur, lifting weights in the outdoor recreation yard.

Critics worry that prison labor undercuts outside wages and gives scarce jobs to prisoners. "I'm concerned that prisoners would be used as a union-busting tool," Marin says.

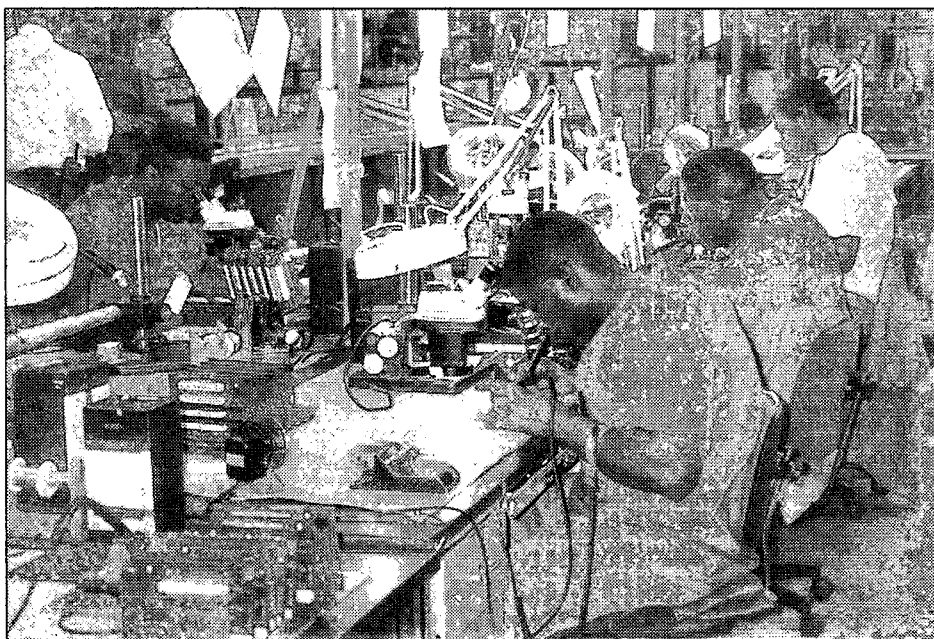
In fact, TWA has used inmate labor to break strikes. During a flight-attendant strike in 1986, TWA turned its reservation clerks into flight attendants and put inmates to work on the phone. The airline company still pays \$5 an hour to inmate reservation clerks at a juvenile facility in Ventura, Calif. That same work, when unionized, pays \$18 an hour.

Prison labor even beats out the competition in Mexico. In search of lower wages, San Francisco-based Data Processing Accounting Services moved U.S. assembly jobs to a maquiladora in Tecate, Mexico. But increased competition sent the company back to the United States in 1992—to San Quentin State Prison.

"Some of the work went to China and some of the work we sent to San Quentin," DPAS owner Bob Tessler says. "Our objective is to find low-cost labor." The company left San Quentin in 1996 because of high prisoner turnover, but it's looking for an alternative site, ideally at another prison.

Critics worry that health and safety standards in prison workplaces are not adequately enforced. Moreover, they argue, inmates can't organize, collectively bargain or obtain concessions from their employer, who is also their prisoner.

"I think it's a disgusting economic development model," says Rick Levey, legal director for the Texas AFL-CIO. "When you have the social cost of maintaining such a massive criminal-justice system and you pay for that through super-exploitation of workers, that's a bad situation for the rest of society." —K.B.



Lockhart inmates paying their debt to society at 85 cents an hour.

PHOTO © KRISTIN BLOOMER

back," by Chris Bryson, this page.)

This alliance between private prison operators and more traditional law-and-order advocates is only natural. David Shichor, professor of criminal justice at California State University-San Bernardino, calls it the "Hilton scheme": "You want to keep your hotel always full."

But unlike the NRA, companies like Wackenhut and the Bobby Ross Group have direct power over prisoners' lives. Marc Mauer, of the Washington, D.C.-based Sentencing Project, warns that the profit incentive for private prison companies could lengthen prisoners' stays. "A critical issue is accountability," Mauer says. "You can imagine someone coming up for probation. The tendency of a private prison will be not to release them."

At Lockhart, for example, Wackenhut officials decide when inmates should be disciplined or given "good time"—both factors considered by parole boards. Inmates can appeal disciplinary actions to a public board, but in making judgments about convicts' futures, the profiteer stands between the prisoner and the state.

Companies serving the corrections industry need an ample quantity of raw material to ensure long-term growth. Since that raw material is prisoners, the industry will do whatever it can to guarantee a steady supply. ◀

Kristin Bloomer is a staff writer for the *Rutland Daily Herald* in Vermont.

The NRA strikes back

By Chris Bryson

An important and largely overlooked force driving the prison boom in the United States is the National Rifle Association. With a membership of some 3 million, an estimated war chest of \$140 million, and paid lobbyists in all 50 states, the NRA has thrown its weight behind so-called "get tough on crime" measures and prison-building initiatives.

In an attempt to change its image from pro-gun to anti-crime, the NRA formed CrimeStrike in 1991 as a division of its lobbying arm, the Institute for Legislative Action. The NRA shifted gears in response to growing popular disgust with the group's opposition to the Brady bill and its support for the sale of assault rifles and teflon-coated "cop-killer" bullets. Those campaigns had also drawn attacks from law-enforcement groups that had once supported the gun lobby.

"It's frightening how effective CrimeStrike has been," says Steven Donziger, editor of *The Real War on Crime*. By orchestrating well-funded efforts to lengthen prison sentences and build new prisons, Donziger says, CrimeStrike has effectively served as a front group for the many constituencies that profit from an expanded crime-control and prison industry.

CrimeStrike logged its first victory in November 1993 when it backed Washington state's "Three Strikes and You're Out" initiative, the nation's first. The NRA provided

Jailhouse stock

By Ken Silverstein

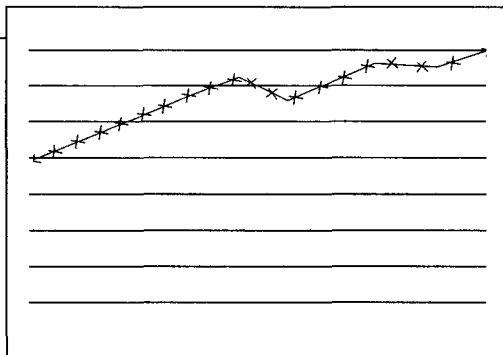
The euphoria among proprietors of private prisons is shared by financial analysts, who are herding investors into Wall Street's latest "boom" industry. The headline above a recent *USA Today* story—"Everybody's doin' the jailhouse stock"—cheerfully captures the exhilaration of industry watchers.

The astronomical rise in the stock-market value of private prison companies is making investors giddy; the value of Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) stock, for example, has quadrupled during the past four years. Brian Ruttenbur, a Nashville-based analyst for Equitable Securities Corp., believes share prices will continue to climb. "There's a lot of investment opportunities out there," he says. "During the next 12 to 18 months, I expect [private prison] stocks to rise by an average of 40 percent, and perhaps by more."

Because they are private firms that answer to shareholders, prison companies have been predictably vigorous in seeking ways to cut costs. In 1985, a private firm announced its intention to build a prison in Pennsylvania on a toxic-waste dump, which it had bought at the bargain rate of \$1. The state legislature, however, rejected that plan.

To be profitable, private prison firms must ensure that new facilities are not only built, but also filled. A bullish report on CCA issued by Prudential Securities cautions, "It takes time to bring inmate population levels up to where they cover costs. Low occupancy is a drag on profits." Still, says the report, company earnings will be strong if CCA succeeds in "ramp[ing] up population levels in its new facilities." A 1995 Prudential report on Wackenhut, the other behemoth in the private prison industry, reflects the same concern: "The fine tuning of earnings figures hinges critically on bed count and when new prisons become occupied."

The outlook on this front, however, appears promising. Ruttenbur co-authored a 1997 study entitled "Crime Still Pays," which notes that the U.S. prison population "is expected to more than double" during the next 10 years, primarily due to "increasing crime, rising incarceration rates and longer prison sentences." More good news for investors is the rising incidence of juvenile crime—"a time bomb set to explode"—and growing opportunities in the international market.



\$50,000 in crucial last-minute financing that enabled the local sponsor, Washington Citizens for Justice, to place the initiative on the ballot. "We would have failed without CrimeStrike," says Dave LaCourse, the group's director.

That success was rapidly followed by similar victories in California and Virginia, where NRA lobbyists again provided essential money and manpower to "three strikes" campaigns. In Virginia and Mississippi, according to CrimeStrike state legislative affairs director Susan Misiore, the NRA was "instrumental" in passing truth-in-sentencing measures, which lengthened average prison sentences.

CrimeStrike has also led the charge to accelerate prison-building programs around the country. In Texas in 1993 and Mississippi in 1994, the NRA lobbied for billion-dollar bond initiatives to fund prison construction. The NRA-backed public ad campaign in Texas led to the construction of an additional 76,000 prison beds in two years. The state has imported prisoners from as far away as Hawaii to fill the cells and has hired 12,000 new prison staff to guard the growing inmate population.

At the federal level, the NRA lobbied hard for the 1994 crime bill, which, among other things, increased the federal funds available to states for building new prisons from \$3 billion to \$10 billion. CrimeStrike executive director Elizabeth Swazey says the frequency with which legislators quoted from NRA literature during congressional debate on the bill illustrates how effective CrimeStrike was.

Swazey calls juvenile justice "one of the most important areas of criminal-justice reform." CrimeStrike is currently examining juvenile-sentencing laws in all 50 states and lobbying for new measures to have young people sentenced as adults.

The NRA's embrace of "get tough on crime" rhetoric is paying off. Despite the widespread criticism of the NRA in the early '90s, donations to the organization's legislative fund rose to \$18 million in 1993, about double the amount given in 1988, according to Donziger. "There is a direct link," he says. "They recognized a business opportunity, and they chose to exploit it."

Chris Bryson is a freelance writer based in New York City.

"This industry can grow in bad times as well as good because the crime rate goes up during recessions, and that means jail populations go up as well," Ruttenbur says. He notes, for example, that rates of robbery, assault and murder increased significantly during the past two recessions, with murder rates climbing by 6.2 percent during the 1981 downturn and 4.3 percent during the recession of 1990-91. All of this adds up to a "strong buy" recommendation from Ruttenbur for the stocks issued by three major private prison companies.

On the other hand, prison disturbances can create real problems for investors. The share price of Esmor Correctional Services Inc. stock plunged from \$20 to \$7 following the 1994 riot at its immigrant detention center in Elizabeth, N.J.

Ken Silverstein is co-editor of *Counterpunch*, an investigative newsletter.

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L A B O R

Flying the perilous skies

It almost reads like a treatment for an oddball Hollywood thriller. A Democratic president invokes little used and highly controversial powers to quash a strike by workers who make over \$100,000 a year and vote Republican. Despite the move's clear anti-union intent, national labor leaders turn a blind eye to the president's act. The unbowed would-be strikers insist the company meet their demands, which include a double-digit raise and a guarantee their jobs won't be lost to fellow employees who belong to a rival union. The company's chief executive, who also votes Republican, inflames passions by threatening to dismantle his global empire if he doesn't get his way. Tension builds as a government-appointed mediator tries to settle the dispute.

The American Airlines labor dispute, portrayed as a battle of rich against rich, is, in fact, a classic labor standoff.

By Kevin Kelly

Welcome to the labor war pitting American Airlines Inc. against its pilots. Billed by most of the mainstream media as a battle of the rich against the rich, the dispute has engaged the attention of few Americans, except perhaps as a slightly twisted drama that might delay their flights. No doubt, the American pilots are an unlikely group to receive much sympathy. They are highly paid, work fewer hours than most folks and exhibit little solidarity with their union brethren. When American's flight attendants struck two years ago, the pilots crossed the picket lines and continued to fly.

But the struggle of the 9,300 American Airlines jet pilots represented by the Allied Pilots Association (APA) isn't some esoteric high-noon showdown. Instead, it is a classic labor standoff involving core matters of wages and outsourcing. Says University of California-Berkeley labor economist Harley Shaiken, "The pilots' high salaries shouldn't detract from the fact that they're fighting over brass-level labor issues."

The pilots, who sacrificed wage increases during American's lean years earlier in the decade, want something back. American posted record profits of \$1 billion in 1996, and this year looks even brighter. It's easy to see why many Americans scoff at these concerns. How often—aside from pro sports—does the country confront unionized workers who make as much as \$200,000 a year? The pilots' demand for a raise seems absurd to many given the travails of the airline industry, which lost \$13 billion between 1990 and 1994, not to mention the recent experience of the average American worker. "There's a sense I get from the public that since no one has gotten decent raises in recent years, why should we?" one American pilot says.

American's cantankerous chief executive, Robert Crandall, plays on this inverted class anger by hyping the notion that American can't compete if it hikes pilot pay. But it's hard to follow Crandall's logic. The pilots aren't asking for huge increases. They're only demanding 11 percent over five years, including the two-and-a-half years they've been in negotiation with American and continued to work without a contract. The proposed wage increase averages only slightly more than 2 percent a year, roughly even with inflation.

Nor do continued claims of poverty by Crandall hold water. Average ticket prices are up more than 25 percent during the last two years. The small carriers like Kiwi and ValuJet that once threatened the hegemony of the industry's Big Three—Delta, United and American—are in deep trouble, and money for new start-ups has disappeared. Overall, major airline costs are lower than they've been in years, thanks to layoffs and paltry raises. The result? Industry prof-

its hit \$4 billion last year and could top that in 1997.

Crandall's resistance to a raise also flies against the history of airline labor deals. Like the auto industry, the airline industry operates around pattern labor contracts. Agreements struck by one carrier are basically replicated by other airlines. On March 3, United Airlines agreed to give its pilots a 10 percent raise spread over two years. While the United pilots were making less than their counterparts at American, thanks to a deal two years ago that traded wage concessions for stock in the airline, the deal sets the floor for pilot raises this year.

If pay were the only issue, perhaps a deal would have been easier to conclude. The real impediment to any contract is the small-jet dispute. The pilots fear they are about to become the latest victims of outsourcing—corporate America's practice of cutting costs by turning jobs over to lower-paid workers. The pilots complain that Crandall wants to take their jobs away and turn them over to lower-paid pilots who work at the airline's commuter carrier, American Eagle. This would happen, they say, if American Eagle pilots fly the new 70-seat jets the carrier plans to buy.

American insists that it can't compete with such low-cost rivals as Southwest Airlines unless the company replaces its slow and uncomfortable propeller-driven turboprop fleet with the small jets. These jets can fly nearly twice as far, use much less fuel than normal jets, and operate at a fraction of the cost of American's most popular small jet, the 120-seat McDonnell Douglas MD-80. These innocent-seeming new jets could easily end up on commuter routes currently flown by APA pilots using longer-range aircraft.

The pilots don't oppose buying the planes. They understand the planes could significantly lower the carrier's cost of flying. The union's own studies show that flying the 70-seat jet 1,200 miles costs only 5.5 cents per available seat mile (an airline cost standard), almost 25 percent less than Southwest Airline's costs, the industry's lowest. But the APA wants to make sure its pilots fly these aircraft. The pilots' contract stipulates they are the only personnel at American who can fly jets. The pilots worry American will use the new jets to ground them on many routes and substitute American Eagle pilots, who make an average of only \$35,000 a year.

The APA pilots clearly understand American's logic. Why pay someone \$110,000 to fly a half-empty 120-seat jet back and forth between Dallas and Minneapolis when you can pay someone \$35,000 to fly a nearly full 70-seat jet? "This is a big-time outsourcing issue," says Michael Boyd, the APA's financial advisor. "These are not commuter aircraft. They will end up flying routes normally served by APA pilots."

Unfortunately, the 2,200 American Eagle pilots wouldn't mind flying those routes. Many Eagle pilots believe that getting out of the turboprop ghetto will help them boost their salaries. The Air Line Pilots Association, which represents these pilots, has kept mum. The union is caught in a bind: ALPA represents both American Eagle pilots who would

benefit from the additional work and jet pilots at Delta, Northwest and United whose job security will undoubtedly come under attack if American's outsourcing strategy succeeds. In fact, Delta has already barred ALPA pilots from flying its regional commuter flights. "This could really backfire on ALPA," Shaiken says.

Unable to count on support from ALPA, the American pilots have had to fly largely on their own, although the carrier's flight attendants have announced their support for the pilots. Even the AFL-CIO has turned a blind eye, largely because ALPA is a federation member and the APA is not.

The AFL-CIO's reticence provided all the political cover President Clinton needed to invoke the Railway Labor Act, the first time a president has done so in the airline industry in more than 30 years. The act allows him to suspend strikes that could adversely affect interstate commerce. After Clinton's move, a federation spokesperson said he sympathized with the APA pilots, but noted that a strike would have hurt the traveling public and other workers at American.

Clinton's move was clearly popular. It prevented travel disruptions and ignited big fare discounts. But it surely snatched victory away from the pilots. It's a rare airline that consents to a strike. American, for instance, could have lost close to \$20 million a day. A 45-day strike might have wiped out the carrier's expected 1997 profit of \$950 million. The president's actions also sent a clear message to the pilots at other carriers. The strike option is out. "Our most effective weapon is gutted," moans one pilot.

So what now? A three-person presidential board will soon begin hearings. Both sides will lay out their positions. Around March 17, the commission will suggest a settlement. If the two sides accept the deal, the dispute is over. If not, a final 30-day cooling-off period begins. If a deal can't be fashioned by then, the pilots will be allowed to strike—but only if Congress doesn't step in and impose a contract. American lobbyists are already hard at work on Capitol Hill building support should the arbitration process fail.

That doesn't look likely. Fissures have opened among the pilots, with many older pilots lining up against a strike. The lack of public and labor support, combined with President Clinton's intervention, has dampened the will to fight. There are also indications that American, not willing to push its luck too far, may accept some limits on the use of jets on Eagle routes. But that's hardly good news for the pilots. Once those jets are airborne on some routes, they can count on American to relentlessly fight to expand their use in the commuter business.

It's a pretty typical labor struggle. Any Auto Worker or Steelworker could testify that companies count on building small concessions made yesterday into bigger concessions tomorrow. It doesn't matter whether you're earning \$100,000 or \$35,000. You're still a sitting duck. Or in this case, a grounded pilot. ◀

Kevin Kelly follows the airline industry from San Francisco.

B L A C K A M E R I C A

Born again

Spurred by the Million Man March, black churches are again becoming forces for social and political change.

By Salim Muwakkil

It's Tuesday night at the Trinity United Church of Christ on Chicago's South Side, and Jawanza Kunjufu is conducting his weekly "Black Liberation Workshop." Kunjufu, author of books such as *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, is an active member of Trinity and an uncompromising black nationalist.

Not long ago, such a combination would have been considered an oxymoron. Nationalists regarded Christianity with suspicion at best, and many denounced it outright as a tool of white oppression designed to sap the spirit of black rebellion. But things have changed. This is not your father's black church.

Participants in Kunjufu's workshops at Trinity do everything from discuss current books by black authors to develop strategies to improve their community. One such strategy is the church's outreach programs, in which groups of

black men blanket high-crime areas, confronting local youth face to face and counseling them about the educational and employment opportunities that the church offers.

"You'd really be surprised at just how effective that technique has been," Kunjufu says. "By meeting them on their turf, on their terms, we show them respect and they appreciate that. But we also show them that we're not intimidated by their swagger—that church men are strong and assertive. We've pulled in dozens, perhaps hundreds, of youth off the street and into programs using this process."

The Rev. Jeremiah Wright is Trinity's pastor and the prime mover behind the church's innovative, aggressive approach to community empowerment. He is one of many Christian preachers who subscribe to a kind of "liberation theology." Kunjufu explains: "There are three types of churches: entertainment, which are all music, shouting and emotionalism; containment, which are open only on Sunday

from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.; and liberation, which is the only effective church. Liberation churches are driven by theology that requires Christians to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and free the captives."

By actively addressing an array of social and political issues affecting African-Americans, Trinity has earned considerable notice. With a membership of more than 7,000, it is one of Chicago's fastest-growing congregations, drawing its parishioners primarily from the ranks of the educated middle class.

Chicago is home to other black churches with a similar agenda. A few blocks southwest of Trinity, for example, is the Fernwood United Methodist Church, the headquarters of the Million Man March's Local Organization Committee, which has remained active in community issues since the October 1995 march.

Chicago is far from unique. Black churches across the country are defying stereotypes and attracting baby boomers weaned on '60s activism. This marks a remarkable change from the radical ideas of that era that equated Christianity with submission. For many black activists, Christianity not only was "the opiate of the masses" that Marxists denounced, it was also—with its overwhelmingly European icons—an instrument of white supremacy.

That judgment had been a strong undercurrent in black nationalism since at least 1887, when Edward W. Blyden, a Liberian author who inspired the Pan-African movement, published *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*. Blyden, himself a Christian minister who later converted to Islam, concluded that "Christianity had stymied and thwarted the development of the Negro."

Although nationalists bemoaned Christianity's pacific influence, they often overlooked the black church's capacity to cultivate the seeds of dissent: Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey and Gabriel Prosser were all Christian preachers who led

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slave insurrections. Other historical figures combined aspects of Christian doctrine with their notions of racial redemption. Bishop Henry Turner, for example, was a prominent African nationalist and a leader in the African Methodist Episcopal church. Marcus Garvey, whose Universal Negro Improvement Association was the largest black nationalist group in history, established the African Orthodox Church, which was a kind of Christianity with black faces.

Although the church played a crucial role during the civil rights struggle, '60s activists made a decided turn away from the Christian tradition that had nurtured previous generations. That shift can be attributed in large part to the influence of Malcolm X, the eloquent black orator who represented Elijah Muhammad's rabidly anti-Christian Nation of Islam for most of his public years. Malcolm regularly ridiculed "jack-leg preachers" for doing the bidding of "blue-eyed devils."

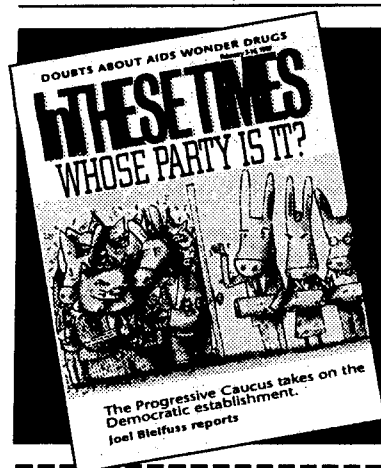
Ironically, the NOI's black-nationalist orientation has been a major influence in altering the contemporary face of black Christianity, a change which partially accounts for its current dynamism. Many of the so-called "liberation churches" borrow heavily from the NOI's structure. Their men's divisions, for example, are often deliberately patterned after the Nation's "Fruit of Islam" security force. Responding to criticism of blacks venerating European images of divinity, most of these churches now display religious icons of a darker hue while Afrocentric motifs increasingly dominate church decor.

The NOI has also served more directly as a catalyst for a new wave of Christian activism. When Minister Louis Farrakhan called for the Million Man March two years ago, he immediately put traditional black leadership on the defensive. Eight months before the scheduled march, the Rev. Jesse Jackson called more than 200 high-powered black ministers together for a strategy meeting. "We must go on the moral offensive," Jackson told the assembled group. "It is up to preachers to take up the cross of leadership and education and bring America back to the moral center."

Jackson, who had not yet jumped on the march bandwagon, was trying to revive a seemingly moribund Christian movement in order to fend off the challenge of Farrakhan's growing influence. Ultimately, however, the enormous popularity of the march revealed that black America was dissatisfied with the inability of traditional black leaders to respond effectively to the racism entrenched in American society.

Farrakhan's ascension to the top ranks of leadership troubled many who considered him an enemy of Christianity. The recent transformation of the Rev. Benjamin Chavis, an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and the former head of the NAACP, to Minister Benjamin Muhammad of the NOI will do little to ease the worries of church officials.

As it turned out, the vast majority of the men at the Washington march were and remained Christians, and many returned home determined to increase their involvement in community-building. Because of its history and ubiquity, the



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black church provides the ideal venue for community work. Many churches have returned to the old tradition of building homes and schools and pooling economic resources.

"Put simply, the thousands of young blacks returning to the nation's 65,000 black churches truly constituted, as the *Washington Post* stated, 'a movement sweeping through black middle-class congregations,' " writes Beverly Hall Lawrence in her 1996 book, *Reviving the Spirit: A Generation of African-Americans Goes Home to Church*.

While it's difficult to gather hard statistics on the issue, Lawrence is convinced by anecdotal accounts, her own reporting and the available data that black church membership is going up. "African-Americans are part of the larger return of baby boomers to religion," she notes.

The influx of black congregates is also changing the nature of the black church. "The coming-to-church-for-personal-salvation-only days are over," Lawrence writes. "Now we are looking not only for personal salvation but social salvation." The challenges of the church have become more secular in response to the new concerns of its booming membership. "My generation sees little separation between the traditional spiritual function of the church and the need for black political and economic parity," Lawrence adds.

Lawrence's argument reinforces the notion that the growth of the church is related to a turn toward black self-reliance and nationalism. "Unlike traditional civil right organizations, the church does not depend on white corporate money or government dollars to survive," she writes. "The black church is funded solely by the black community."

Lawrence offers the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore as a prime example of her argument. In 1990, *Newsweek* ranked Bethel as one of the five fastest-growing congregations, black or white, in America. Bethel's membership climbed from 310 in 1975 to nearly 10,000 in 1996, and, Lawrence reveals, it is the nerve center of much of Baltimore's black politics. The church's pastor, the Rev. Frank Madison Reid III, is one of the city's most influential voices.

Bethel's success is extraordinary, but many other black churches have enjoyed similar, if more modest, bursts of growth in recent years. Their congregations, too, are demanding more social and political engagement. In an age when politicians of both parties demean the social role of government, the black church is becoming more important as an anchor of both social relief and economic development.

In January, leaders of the eight major black denominations met at the Congress of National Black Churches in Charlotte, N.C., and resolved to expand their efforts at job training and placement, to encourage entrepreneurial development, and to ensure that black students are educated to work with computers and information technology. "It seems clear that the government is getting out of the job-training and safety-net business," said Bishop Roy Winbus, the Congress's chairman. "So it looks like we're going to have to pick up the slack."



Boom and bust

D

eng Xiaoping's last significant public act took place in January 1992, when he made a historic visit to some of the boomtowns in China's southeastern coastal region. He was already 87 years old, not well, and he moved about slowly, as one of his daughters loudly repeated everything that was said to him. He made the highly publicized tour to promote his economic "reform" program, the sweeping transformations that earned him glowing eulogies in the Western press in February.

When he assumed power in the late '70s, Deng set China on a path of capitalist growth led by exports and based on state-subsidized, low-wage industries. In the '90s, he accelerated those reforms. Foreign investment has poured into China from other parts of Asia and the West. In 1995 alone, China was the recipient of \$38

billion in foreign investment, accounting for approximately half the total going to the entire Third World.

The deal works like this: Foreign firms can take advantage of China's cheap labor force as long as they transfer technology to China and agree not to sell their products to the Chinese market. Thanks to this neo-mercantilist policy, Chinese exports have shot up from \$10 billion in 1978 to \$52 billion in 1990 and an incredible \$120 billion in 1994. The United States imported \$51.5 billion worth of goods from China in 1996, mainly in labor-intensive products such as toys, garments, shoes and electronics. Last year, China's economy grew at a remarkable 9.5 percent.

The Western business press raves about China. Even thoughtful observers like Jim Rohwer, formerly of the *Economist*, gush that "the gradual but relentless lifting of 2 billion rural Asians out of poverty over the years 1980-2020 ... will make possible the extraordinary boom in consumption and

urbanization that has already begun radically to reshape the world economy."

But Deng's legacy is far more ambiguous. The Chinese economic boom is uneven, costly and wasteful, and a significant majority of people are being left behind and left out.

Guangzhou, a historic coastal city up the Pearl River from Hong Kong, is often cited as a prime example of China's success. In the southeast section of town is the lively Qingping market, which started up in the early '80s after the Communist regime relaxed its ban on small trading. It is a crowded old neighborhood with a faded charm. Market stalls offer everything from clothing and kitchen utensils to foodstuffs that include exotic fare like turtles and live snakes.

Just around the corner, however, looms the nearly completed, 30-story, eight-towered Liwan Plaza, a shopping and apartment complex. The huge structure is in postmodern pink and purple, with aqua-green trim. The building, being built with foreign capital, in no way grows from or fits into its setting.

At the back of the new plaza are the miserable living quarters for the construction workers. Over the past 10 to 15 years, a lack of work in the rural interior has created what the Chinese call a "floating population." This influx of an estimated 100 million people to the coastal cities may constitute the largest mass migration in recent human history. Some of these migrants ended up here, alongside Liwan Plaza, living in cold metal shacks. Behind sheets of dirty plastic, they sleep on crude beds of plasterboard propped up on red bricks from the building site.

Guangzhou is covered with similar building projects. From the top of the Six Banyan Temple, a beautiful centuries-old wooden Buddhist pagoda that stands nine stories tall in the center of the city, you can count several dozen

The Chinese economic miracle has a darker side that acolytes choose to overlook.

By James North
GUANGZHOU, CHINA

construction cranes in all directions. A few blocks east of the temple, the entire street has been ripped up and replaced by cavernous excavations. Farther in the same direction, near the new railway station, the air is dark with dust as heavy equipment gouges up the earth.

Some visitors regard the construction boom as incontrovertible proof that China is prospering. In fact, places like Liwan Plaza illustrate the dark and questionable side of China's coastal economic boom.

Economic changes before the mid-'80s did boost incomes significantly across the country. But the recent expansion has been concentrated in the coastal cities, leaving behind the rural areas and even the big interior cities like Wuhan or Chongqing. By one estimate, only about 120 million of China's 1.2 billion people earn more than \$1,000 a year, a modest standard of living. The smart young businessmen and women who go disco dancing carrying cellular phones—the beloved subjects of features in the Western mainstream media—are an even smaller minority.

Wages in the boom cities are much higher than in the rural interior, which partly explains the huge rate of migration. Even though many Chinese workers on the coast only earn about \$50 a month, it might take them a year to earn that much tilling the land, says Apo Leong, a guiding force at the Asia Monitor Resource Center, a labor rights organization in Hong Kong.

Yet the new development will exacerbate employment problems in the long run. Under- and unemployment are chronic problems in poorer countries, and China is no exception. A modern shopping complex in a Third World city is madness from a job-creation standpoint. Once Liwan Plaza opens, it will threaten the livelihoods of many of the hundreds of independent shopkeepers in the nearby Qingping market, without creating nearly as many posts for low-paid sales assistants.

Making matters worse, Liwan Plaza is part of a wave of overbuilding that will leave the coastal cities with a glut of unused property. In mid-January, Chinese Construction Minister Hou Jie warned that the boom in commercial and luxury hotel complexes diverted investment from urgently needed housing. The overbuilding seems to be propelled by a

combination of inflated real estate prices due to speculation, unneeded tax abatements and corruption by local officials.

The Chinese coastal development is part of an accelerated cycle of boom and bust as foreign capital seeks workers willing to toil for ever-lower wages. Southeastern China is sometimes called "Greater Hong Kong"—in part because much of the new investment in China originated in Hong Kong, but also because the same patterns of exploitation experienced by Hong Kong in the last three decades are now being repeated on the mainland.

In the '60s and '70s, Hong Kong industrialized, with the help of large investments from expatriate Chinese elsewhere in Asia. As mainland China started to welcome investment in the '80s, the Hong Kong enterprises migrated there. "They can pay workers across the border one-tenth what they pay here," says Leong, adding that Hong Kong itself has already lost 400,000 manufacturing jobs. "Many of the labels that say 'Made in Hong Kong' are actually transshipments from China."

The environment has taken a brutal beating in the headlong rush toward growth. "There was nothing to stop environmental degradation," says Leong. "For example, there are no beaches left in Hong Kong." Air and water pollution in some areas of China have reached unprecedented proportions.

Now Greater Hong Kong is at risk of being abandoned, Leong says. After just a few years, a process of hollowing out has started, as footloose industries scour Vietnam and elsewhere, looking for even lower-paid workers.

Of course, the Chinese economic boom is not entirely a fraud that has benefited only an elite. The first stage of the economic reforms, up until the mid-'80s, included genuine, broad-based development; rural incomes rose remarkably, and the end of the Maoist ban on small traders produced masses of jobs, as in Guangzhou's Qingping market. Great numbers of successful township and village enterprises have formed small, decentralized workshops that are sometimes managed collectively and that employ well over 100 million workers. Also, the rigid, repressive uniformity of the Maoist period eased somewhat.

But the Chinese leadership has kept a tight grip on power. The government has jailed courageous democratic dissidents like Wei Jingsheng and Wang Dan merely for speaking out, and forced others, such as labor leader Han Dongfang, into exile. The regime's unlikely allies include American multinational corporations like Boeing, Caterpillar and General Motors, which are lobbying furiously to prevent human rights groups from attaching conditions to their lucrative economic dealings with China.

The tight organization of Deng's funeral was yet further proof that the Chinese miracle has a dark side. His successors were so afraid of impromptu mass protest that they banned ordinary people from the ceremony. It was not exactly a sign of confidence in Deng's achievements. ◀

James North was a regular contributor to *In These Times* in the '80s.

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I N T H E A R T S

The *Rosewood* syndrome

John Singleton's latest film embodies what's wrong with black filmmaking today.

By Linda DeLibero

The new John Singleton movie, *Rosewood*, will doubtless be gone from theaters soon, with good reason. The film, which purports to tell the true story of a small, prosperous black community in Florida that was destroyed in 1923 by a mob of angry whites, is riddled with clichés and Hollywood schmaltz. *Rosewood* visits territory familiar from any number of “social consciousness” films, from *To Kill a Mockingbird* to *Mississippi Burning* and last year’s execrable *A Time to Kill*. Somehow, bringing a black perspective to the story has not improved it at all.

Why? Inexplicably, Singleton believed that throwing a cowboy movie into the midst of this racial morality tale—Ving Rhames plays a “man with no name” who rides in out of nowhere to save the townspeople—would improve *Rosewood*’s

chances at the box office. Perhaps he also thought that inventing a strong black hero would make the film more palatable to African-American viewers. Rhames is a powerful presence on the screen, but you can’t help feeling that he knows he doesn’t belong in this movie. The truth is, Singleton didn’t need to invent a hero; there were plenty of heroic characters to choose from in the actual *Rosewood*. You can catch an inkling of them in the film through Don Cheadle’s stunning but painfully brief performance as one of these forgotten people, Sylvester Carrier, who defended his home against the mob and subsequently lost both home and family. Ironically, the one fully realized character in *Rosewood* is a white man played by Jon Voight: a conscience-tortured shopkeeper in the midst of the melee.

So why am I still thinking about this forgettable movie weeks later—and why does the experience of having seen it depress me so much? Bad films get made in Hollywood all the time. But the stakes are different when a black filmmaker is involved. John Singleton surely knows this. Doubtless he recalls the time when he was known as “the next Spike Lee,” even as he knew full well that his films had very little in common with those of his “predecessor.” It didn’t matter—they were both black. Just as surely, the label “the next John Singleton” will be attached to succeeding black filmmakers in Hollywood—if there are any, that is. For once Singleton fails decisively, it will signify not only his failure but the dimming hopes of any number of young black filmmakers waiting for the opportunity to make good movies that people will actually see. You can just hear the moguls talking over their power lunch: “Can’t take a chance on another Singleton type; just look at the numbers on *Rosewood*.”

Ironically, those moguls are precisely why a film like *Rosewood* is doomed to failure. Whose fingerprints are all over this latest mess? Those of Jon Peters—former Streisand paramour and, along with Peter Guber, the man famously responsible for almost running Sony Pictures into the ground. Peters produced the film, and one strongly suspects he’s responsible for much of what’s wrong with it. Not to relieve Singleton completely of blame, but which of the two better represents the mentality of last-minute rescues and sugar-coated history? Peters is an ex-hairdresser; John Singleton is an artist of some talent. Who do you bet will survive in the current Hollywood climate?

Let’s imagine, though, an alternative scenario. *Rosewood* gets made, but dares to tell a familiar history in a way that provokes discussion rather than pre-empts it. What, after all, can be said in the face of the endless burnings, shootings and lynchings that scar the history of the South? Show these atrocities purely for their shock value

and audiences—both black and white—can only choose from a very narrow range of responses. Instead, why not borrow from the rich tradition of literature on the subject? As I watched *Rosewood*, I couldn't help remembering a short story by James Baldwin, "Going to Meet the Man," which had the audacity to tell the tale of ritual lynching through the mind of a white, Southern deputy sheriff. Ralph Ellison used a similar strategy in his posthumously published short story "A Party Down at the Square." In both cases, the effect of entering into that particular white consciousness is nearly unbearable—at once horrifying and transcendent. For Baldwin and Ellison, it wasn't enough to record what had happened; they were obsessed with understanding why it happened as well.

But put this realm of horror aside for a moment. Imagine a film that tells the story of what happens afterwards. The survivors of the Rosewood atrocity lived in silence for 60 years, their past forgotten until a curious reporter dug it up. What were those intervening years like for the people who lost their homes and community? The story of the ordinary lives of black people is a major absence that haunts the big screen: A film about these people—who finally gained restitution for their loss as well as an audience for their forgotten history—could have addressed that lack.

There are, in fact, a half-dozen ways to film a story about Rosewood that could steer clear of well-worn territory. You can see an attempt at some sort of innovation around the edges of Singleton's film, though the hokum all but obliterates it. It is difficult to avoid that territory if one chooses, as John Singleton has, to remain a mainstream filmmaker. When you turn to the independents, you have to wonder: Where are the black Billy Bob Thorntons, the Mike Leighs, the brothers Coen? Charles Burnett is the single name likely to come to mind when one thinks of an independent black director who's been turning out consistently interesting films for years. He hasn't gotten nearly the attention that white independents routinely garner.

There is no question that any serious black filmmaker



Ving Rhames as the "man with no name," in *Rosewood*, directed by John Singleton.

faces distinct racial obstacles. But there's also an inability—or unwillingness—among some black filmmakers to see themselves as part of a community, maybe because the pie is so small and the stakes are so high. When Spike Lee came along, he unabashedly presented himself as a first, pointedly omitting the debt he owed to Burnett and other filmmakers who'd been toiling in anonymity for years. Now Lee has proved himself far more adept at making Nike commercials than at making movies, while Burnett keeps making films that go relatively unnoticed. And Singleton—whose first film, *Boyz n the Hood*, showed such promise—has gone the way of a million other independents whose talent seems to vanish before the ink on the first big studio contract is dry.

IN PRINT

Death by metaphor

By Michael Rogin

First in *Idols of Perversity* and now in *Evil Sisters*, Bram Dijkstra has taken a long look at female vampires. He has devoted himself to the fantasies of devouring female sexual power in the literature, popular fiction, science, films, sociology, psychology and art of the past century. *Idols of Perversity* found its female predators in the writing and especially painting of the late-19th century. *Evil Sisters* begins with *A Fool There Was*, the 1915 film that introduced "The Vampire, Miss Theda Bara" to Hollywood stardom and the vamp into American popular culture; it ends with *Mein Kampf*. Along the way, the author ranges freely across such raw material as William Graham Sumner (the founder of American sociology), *The Birth of a Nation*, Sigmund Freud, Dracula, Charles Richet (winner of the 1913 Nobel Prize for physiology), Sax Rohmer's yellow peril Fu Manchu novels, William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and Hitler's favorite painter, Franz von Stuck.

Dijkstra excavates enormously popular pulp fictions, entirely respectable scientific treatises, and canonical works of art and literature in search of female sexual hunger and racial degeneration menacing white men. He observes the fear of contaminated bodily fluids and the confections of racial hierarchy and male supremacy, blood and semen, sex and disease—which together whip white men into frenzies of defensive aggression. The heart of darkness in this fantasy world, according to Dijkstra, is the woman whose sexuality kills. The response solicited, as in the horrifying climax of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, where a team of four men stabs and beheads a female vampire, is to kill the woman.

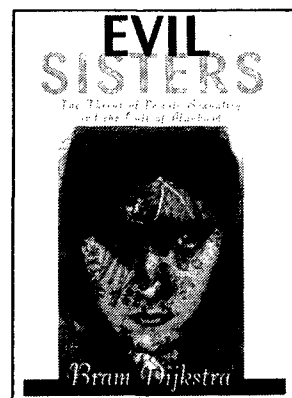
Evil Sisters enters this heart of darkness, but it does not escape unscathed. For this book is in the grip of the obsession it set out to analyze. *Evil Sisters* wants to trace a path from gynecidal fantasy to genocidal mass murder. It fails in that task, distorting a number of its targets along the way, because Dijkstra is interested neither in how the texts and images to which he confines his attention enter actual human history, nor in the difference between representing a

fantasy and endorsing it. Nonetheless, because Dijkstra has not invented the obsession that takes him over, his book cannot, any more than its vampires, be simply and finally buried in its grave.

Evil Sisters is one of any number of recent books where legitimate indignation distorts historical analysis. These books collapse malevolent texts and images together with more complex works that, in spite or perhaps because of their flaws, see more deeply into the horrors of modernity than do the censorious condemnations they provoke. Consider two novels at the center of *Evil Sisters*, Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* (brought to the screen in D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Dijkstra turns these two very different books into one. "Conrad's story," he claims, far from being "a critical exposé of colonialism," in fact "pits a properly evolved, properly gender-organized modern, male-dominant civilization against a pre-revolutionary, female-dominant world of animal passions and brute nature." The heart of darkness for Dijkstra's Conrad is the "archetypal African woman." Conrad has imagined a world, Dijkstra asserts, in which only Dixon's Ku Klux Klan "could ward off this bestial creature of reversion." In Dijkstra's reading, Marlow endorses Kurtz's "Exterminate all the brutes," a call for the Clansman's "Vengeance" to save "Civilization."

Something has gone badly wrong with this picture. It is true that both books target something called imperialism, but whereas *The Clansman* invents an imaginary conspiracy between Northern abolitionists and Southern ex-slaves to grind the white South under the heel of the black South, *Heart of Darkness* confronts the European penetration of Africa. Black men assault white women in Dixon's novel; white predators dominate Conrad's. Dixon advocates lynching and exterminating the black brutes; Conrad gives the line "Exterminate all the brutes!" to his white protofascist, Kurtz. A black woman behind the scenes is the consort of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* and of the Northern abolitionist Stoneman in *The Clansman*, but whereas Dixon's "yellow vampire" orchestrates the evil, Conrad's African queen appears only, with a certain tragic grandeur, at the moment she is abandoned. In Dixon's book, the authorial voice speaks unambiguously, coercing our assent; in Conrad's, it is filtered through an arguably unreliable narrator, Marlow.

Yet although Dijkstra's claims are demonstrably false, he has not made up his *Heart of Darkness* out of whole cloth. Kurtz does try to crawl



Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood
By Bram Dijkstra
Alfred A. Knopf
480 pp., \$30

back to his woman, and Marlow does imagine a feminized Africa that “consumes his flesh.” The very distortions that mar *Evil Sisters*, here and throughout, testify to the power of its vision.

Dijkstra counterposes his own “historical” approach to new critical and existentialist efforts to rescue canonical works of art like *Heart of Darkness* from what he sees as their gynecidal politics. Neither contexts nor texts really matter to this author, however; on analogy with tone-deafness, he is text-blind. Typical of Dijkstra’s many misreadings is his claim that the Jew stands for collectivism in Marx’s “On the Jewish Question”; he is actually Marx’s figure for egotism.

Dijkstra gets “On the Jewish Question” backwards because he has no real interest in anti-Semitism. *Evil Sisters* treats racism and anti-Semitism as if they had no histories of their own but were entirely subsumed under misogyny. Nazis killed Jews, in Dijkstra’s account, because Jews were the most convenient racial scapegoat for their hatred of women. Rightly noting *Birth of a Nation*’s similarities to *Mein Kampf*, Dijkstra then claims that “a ‘chaotic’ immigrant society ... saved America from Hitlerism,” until “antifeminine, anti-Semitic, and racist prejudices” carried the day after World War II. This extraordinary claim, which encapsulates Dijkstra’s ahistoricism, conflates the Cold War red scare and feminine mystique with racism and anti-Semitism. It is as blind to the role of white supremacy in Americanizing immigrants as it is to the postwar decline in American anti-Semitism and the rise of the civil rights movement.

“Metaphors are the gateway to genocide,” Dijkstra insists, so that to acquit metaphors of murder is akin to arguing that “guns don’t kill people, people do.” It is true that exterminatory metaphors in *Birth of a Nation* and the Nazi film *Jud Süß* did justify and pave the way for mass murder. Since metaphors are not guns, however, one must pay close attention to their meaning and take care to distinguish among them. In comparing the language of *The Clansman* and *Heart of Darkness*, for example, it ought to matter that one text endorses, and the other exposes, what one of Conrad’s characters calls the “glorious slaughter.” Fantasies of gynecide, moreover, are not present in *Heart of Darkness*, *Birth of a Nation* or *Jud Süß*. *Evil Sisters* therefore must link metaphor to mass murder in two stages. The first step is to claim that metaphors kill. The second step—which gives *Heart of Darkness* and *Birth of a Nation* pride of place and moves their black women to center stage—is to

argue that “twisted ‘erotic’ fantasies had opened the door to the realities of genocide.”

Femme fatale = gynecide, woman = African = Jew. Just where it is necessary to establish relationships, Dijkstra substitutes identities.

Consider each equation in turn. It does not follow that because some vampire tales mutilate women, all depictions of dangerous female sexuality promote gynecide. *A Fool There Was* was contemporary with *Birth of a Nation*, and *Evil Sisters* accordingly treats the two movies as twins. Theda Bara seduces and destroys men in her unpleasant little film, to be

sure, and she poses with a skeleton in publicity stills. But while *Birth of a Nation* revived the Ku Klux Klan, Theda Bara was promoting a fan craze. “Women are my greatest fans,” claimed the star, “because they see in my vampire the impersonal vengeance of all their unavenged wrongs.”

For Dijkstra, the sexual woman threatens the self-controlled, dominant, saving-not-spending, capitalist man. Not to let capitalism off the hook, but the sources of misogyny lie deeper. Unrelentingly hostile to the examination of internal psychological life, Dijkstra fails to see that since we are all born of

women—and since women, as mothers, objects of desire and conduits for inheritance, have been subjected to historically variant forms of patriarchy—fantasies that bring together sexual desire, female power and revenge are, under the present sexual division of labor, inescapable.

The femme fatale, one condensation for such fantasies, emerged in the late 19th century from the explosive mixture of capitalist expansion, patriarchal crisis, women’s liberation and male anxiety. In some forms, the femme fatale challenged a constricting domesticity and the security of male bourgeois prerogatives; in others, she was the scapegoat. Since she was often both at the same time, distinctions in the use of the image can be difficult to make. But Dijkstra sees no difference between exploratory and murderous fantasies, between imagining something and endorsing it. There will be viewers, like Dijkstra, for whom to see femme fatales is to want to kill them, but then we need to ask who such viewers are. G.W. Pabst’s *Pandora’s Box*, one of Dijkstra’s prime exhibits, answers that question by having Jack the Ripper kill Lulu (Louise Brooks) at the conclusion of the film. Lulu is surely a woman whose sexual allure destroys men, but unlike Theda Bara in *A Fool There Was*, she is magnetically sympathetic as well as dangerous. The movie opens a window onto



a Weimar culture divided between hollow patriarchy and newly liberated female sexuality. With the help of post-Nazi hindsight, one can see Jack the Ripper doing the work for which respectable men are too weak. It would be hard to imagine anyone but a Nazi taking Lulu for the monstrous villain and Jack the Ripper for the hero of the film, but that is exactly what Dijkstra does.

Likewise, when Oscar Wilde's Salome demands the beheading of John the Baptist, Dijkstra shares the response of the paranoid homophobe, who, in Pat Barker's recent World War I novel, *The Eye in the Door*, attends a performance of the play. This man, for whom England is in the grips of a homosexual/German conspiracy, wants to give women like Salome clitorectomies. But Barker also places an officer at the performance who knows that Wilde, far from endorsing Herod's "Kill that woman," himself once played Salome. The officer, though he finds the language of the play impossibly arch and John the Baptist's severed head unshocking in the context of trench warfare, "could see what Wilde was doing." Barker writes: "He was attempting to convey the sense of a great passion constricted, poisoned, denied legitimate outlets, but nonetheless forced to the surface, expressed as destruction and cruelty because it could not be expressed as love." Pat Barker knows the difference, as Dijkstra does not, between Salome and Dracula.

Dijkstra does know, however, that neither Dracula nor the other best-selling vampire horror fictions that glory in violence against women actually led to gynocide. To drive home his thesis about the danger of metaphor, therefore, he deploys his second equation, in which African and Jew replace woman as the object of mass murder. Dijkstra is not the first to see this substitution. Klaus Theweleit's two-volume *Male Fantasies* exposes the violent reduction of the red woman to a bloody pulp in the documentary novels of far-right nationalist Freikorps members and other proto-Nazis that flourished in the wake of Germany's defeat in World War I and the savage repression of the revolutionary working class. Theweleit, unlike Dijkstra, focuses on actual fascist texts that celebrate the murder of women. But having convincingly located gynecidal desire at the fascist core, Theweleit ignores Judeocide. Sander Gilman has linked women to Jews by showing that turn-of-the-century medicine and science invented a diseased, feminized Jewish male body. But while Gilman avoids the conspiratorial power of Jews in exterminatory Nazi fantasy, Dijkstra does not. He spots a menorah in the first scene between Lulu and Schigolch, the old degenerate who initiated her into sexual life, and the Jewish nose on F.W. Murnau's Dracula, *Nosferatu*. By identifying the sinister Jew behind the woman, Dijkstra argues, works like *Nosferatu* and *Pandora's Box* engineered the shift from gynocide to Judeocide, from "Kill that woman" to "Kill the Jew."

This claim cannot be dismissed out of hand. Though neither *Nosferatu* nor *Pandora's Box* is organized around anti-Semitism, the nose and the menorah are, once Dijkstra points

them out, unfortunately inescapable. We need not agree that those racial markers entirely discredit the films; *Nosferatu* and *Pandora's Box* remain compelling, even as they provide evidence for the association of vampire and Jew. But Dijkstra's version of the shift from devouring woman to Jewish man runs into a much more serious problem, for there are no female vampires either in *Nosferatu*, where the Jewish theme is barely alluded to, or in another document to which *Evil Sisters* devotes considerable space, *Mein Kampf*.

"In *Mein Kampf* the Jew was identified as the ur-form of the sexual woman," claims Dijkstra, but nowhere does Hitler say any such thing. The substitution (Jewish man for vampire woman) may be so total that no trace of the original is left behind, but the absence of the core fantasy of female vampirism from the core exterminatory text ought to have given Dijkstra some pause. Hitler certainly dwells on the Jewish vampire, whose evil brew of blood, semen, syphilis and money poisons the Aryan national body. But whereas Dijkstra rightly sees Hitler's Jew, like the "master vampire," upsetting the natural sexual division between "continent men and constantly breeding women," the Jewish menace extends far beyond sexual predation into racial biology, financial conspiracy and Judeo-Bolshevik plot. The link between gynocide and genocide is not credible if it blots out the long history of European anti-Semitism, transformed into genocide not just by the racial and sexual science Dijkstra examines, but also by mechanized imperial violence, total war, German defeat, economic cataclysm and Bolshevik threat.

Like so many of his sources, Dijkstra has been possessed by the female vampire and discovers her behind everything he sees. It is one thing to find in the first half of this century a teeming world of racialized, sexualized biological paranoia, but quite another to derive all the fantasies and mass murders that came out of that world from a single ur-nightmare. We are indebted to Dijkstra, as to Theweleit and Gilman, for opening up a set of connections that more conventional historians ignore. Sexual disturbance is indeed entwined with racial murder, as the obsession with poisoners and race defilers in anti-Semitic and anti-black delusions makes clear. But a genuinely historical account has to explain when and why Africans, when and why African-Americans, when and why Jews. It has to show how phantoms of the brain become nightmares of history. It has to treat racialized oppression and racial fantasies seriously and not simply wave Dracula around. It has to allow space for and distinguish among metaphors of destructive female power and not join a witch hunt that wants to kill them all. In so far as *Evil Sisters* has been taken over by its own pulp fiction and pulp science sources, it turns instead into a work of pulp history. ◀

Michael Rogin is a professor of political science at the University of California-Berkeley and the author of *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (University of California Press).

Mouseketopia

By Daniel Lazare

One of the nice things about being on the crest of the baby boom is that one's personal concerns tend to coincide with those of the public at large. After writing eight novels that few people read and never earning more than \$15,000 a year, James Howard Kunstler decided as he was entering middle age to give journalism a try. He landed articles on land-use issues in the *New York Times Magazine*, and then in 1993 he wrote a book, *The Geography of Nowhere*, that managed to express the anger that a growing number of people of his generation feel about the ravages of suburban sprawl. *Mirabile dictu*, the book was a success. Kunstler, it turned out, had a talent for architectural analysis—his chapter on what happened when developers invaded his home town of Sarasota Springs, N.Y., was a classic—and a knack for invective. Gas stations, fast-food drive-throughs and other artifacts of suburban sprawl were not merely unattractive, but “ubiquitous highway crud.” Roadside clutter was not merely an eyesore, but “a chaos of gigantic, lurid plastic signs, golden arches, red-and-white striped revolving chicken buckets, cinder-block carpet warehouses, discount marts, asphalt deserts, and a horizon slashed by utility poles.” The results were not merely depressing, but “so horrible that every trace of human aspiration seems to have been expelled, except the impetus to sell.”

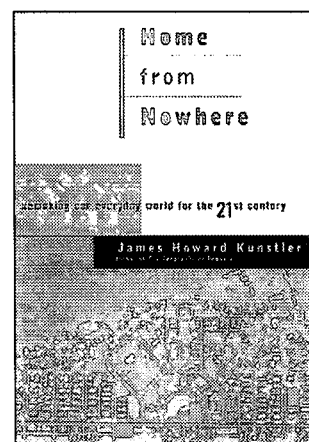
It would be nice to say that rhetoric like this is overblown, but, as anyone who has ever set foot in the great suburban wilderness can attest, it is not. Indeed, if Kunstler had a bit more historical perspective, he might have observed that American capitalism has used its awesome productive capability to create a new form of ugliness so extreme and dispiriting that Dickens' Coketown seems uplifting by comparison.

Now, however, Kunstler has gone constructive on us, and the results are much less satisfying. With his new book, *Home From Nowhere: Remaking Our Everyday World for the 21st Century*, he aims not just to criticize but to help Americans rebuild their communities along more humane lines. He has emerged as a passionate devotee of the New

Urbanism, an architectural movement that stresses the importance of building for people rather than cars, of mixing things up rather than segregating economic functions through zoning, and of designing communities that emphasize walking and face-to-face human contact, unmediated by a windshield. In addition to slash-and-burn developers, the villains this time around are NIMBYs, BANANAs (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything) and open-space freaks who fail to understand that what people need are not more woods and fields in their midst, but well-designed, tightly clustered communities. Two of the book's main heroes are Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, the Miami architects who have done so much to promote the New Urbanism since the '80s and have spawned a host of imitators throughout the country.

Kunstler's passion is understandable. For decades, architects have devoted themselves to feeding the egos of the rich or helping ruthless developers make a fast buck, so it's nice to see them trying for once to build real communities in which kids can go to school and parents can shop without being entirely dependent on a car. But the New Urbanism suffers from a fatal flaw, what might be called the designer's fallacy. This is the notion that if American suburbs are ugly, wasteful and mind-numbing, then the solution is to design new ones that are not ugly, wasteful, etc. The answer to bad planning is good planning. But while this looks good on paper and undoubtedly goes down well in architecture schools in which students are encouraged to think of themselves as saviors of the world, in reality the consequences range from the artificial to the perverse. Trying to design one's way out of a profound social crisis is like trying to cure obesity with a tightfitting corset. One may wind up with a thinner waistline, but elsewhere the fat will bunch up and spill over in a way that is more unsightly than ever.

There is no better example of this push-down and pop-up effect than Celebration, the \$2.5 billion, 20,000-person planned community that the Disney Corp. is building 15 miles south of Disney World in Orlando, Fla. Given the numerous wisecracks in *Home From Nowhere* about EuroDisney, “mouseketopia” and the like, it is clear that Kunstler does not like Disney, indeed that he thinks of it as the leading edge of the junk culture that is destroying civilization. Yet Celebration is the culmination of the New Urbanist movement, its grandest achievement to date. As Witold Rybczynski noted



Home From Nowhere:
Remaking Our Everyday
World for the 21st Century
By James Howard Kunstler
Simon & Schuster
318 pp., \$24



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in the *New Yorker* last summer, the project is being constructed according to classic town-planning principles all but abandoned after World War II. It will concentrate stores and businesses in a central commercial district rather than allow them to be strung out along the highway. It will be decidedly “mixed-use,” with townhouses, detached homes and apartments located atop shops and offices. Instead of airport-sized parking lots, it will try to squeeze parking into the center of blocks. Its homes will have features that modern architects have long eschewed but that ordinary folks still love: gable roofs with dormers, bay windows and porches, balustrades and columns.

Most of all, Celebration will be a community—or, rather, a corporate facsimile of one. “We understand that community is not something we can engineer,” Todd Mansfield, executive vice president of Disney Imagineering, told Rybczynski. “But we think it is something we can foster.” Among other things, this means restrictive deed covenants detailing how many cars residents can park in front of their homes (two), what they may sublet (homes or apartments but not individual rooms—Disney does not want deinstitutionalized schizophrenics moving to town), who can work out of their home and who cannot (artists and writers are OK, but dentists, except in certain designated areas, are not), and so on. Although Rybczynski is optimistic that social conflict will not be entirely absent from this late-capi-

Celebration: Disney Corp.’s vision for picture-perfect living.

talist utopia, it’s safe to say that the “imagineers” will be careful to admit it only in dribs and drabs, so as not to endanger the overall effect.

The results—the logical outcome of trying to design a community from the ground up—are to real community what Disney World’s “Pirates of the Caribbean” exhibit is to the real swashbucklers of the 17th and 18th centuries. Given Michael Eisner’s reputation as an architecture buff, it is not surprising that a lot of big names have had a hand in designing Celebration—people like Michael Graves, Philip Johnson, Robert Venturi and, yes, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, “whose concept of traditional neighborhood development,” according to Rybczynski, “is a major influence on Celebration’s residential areas.” Presumably, Kunstler is aware of the link between Disney and the New Urbanists, but he somehow neglected to mention it in his book. As a result, the antithesis that *Home From Nowhere* posits between corporate monsters chewing up the landscape and heroic planners fending them off turns out to be a false one. Kunstler’s architectural heroes turn out to be working arm-in-arm with his greatest enemy.

How can this be? The answer is simple. In the final analysis, Duany and Plater-Zyberk are in the nostalgia busi-

ness, and so is Disney. Given the high-profile presence of both in Florida, a marriage between the design skills of one and the capital and marketing abilities of the other was inevitable. Sooner or later, the folks who gave us a multi-culti *Pocahontas* and a sensitive-guy *Hunchback of Notre Dame* were bound to realize that if well-heeled suburbanites wanted "community," then there had to be a way to package it and sell it to them.

Celebration is thus commodified communalism. Rather than real towns, cities and villages in which people work and struggle, it represents a sophisticated illusion that will be no less sterile and regimented than the old-style suburbs now littering the landscape, and possibly more so. Like Disney World, it will essentially be a pedestrian arcade in the middle of an auto-ravaged environment. In the absence of effective mass transit, residents will still drive whenever they need to leave its confines. While they may very well wind up doing some shopping on foot, it's not hard to imagine what it will be for—books, fudge, gourmet foods and other such items commonly found in "quaint" village centers. When it comes to more serious items like clothes, furniture and electronics, they'll undoubtedly pile into the car and head for a big box store. Celebration will no more inhibit the spread of auto culture than did the shopping mall—which, come to think of it, is also usually laid out to be compact and walkable.

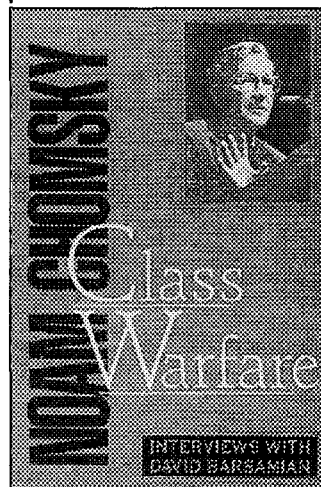
Ultimately, the problem with the New Urbanism is its rejection of politics. If the rise of the great industrial cities of the 19th century inaugurated a new era of mass politics and labor organization, then the great wave of de-urbanization that struck in the early 20th century was a utopian effort aimed at unwinding the spool of history, dispersing workers, weakening working-class consciousness and diffusing class struggle.

Similarly, true re-urbanization requires re-politicization, re-engagement with history and renewed class consciousness. It also requires democracy, an active process in which the people use their sovereignty to construct real communities rather than to purchase cardboard cut-outs from giant corporations. Contrary to the teachings of decades of Jeffersonian provincialism, this does not mean local democracy, but democracy at the national—or even international—level, in which people create new priorities for themselves and for society as a whole. In the next such great transformation—which may well lie just around the corner—architecture will undoubtedly play a role, but many other things will as well.

By reducing the urban problem to one of design, Kunstler has wound up reinforcing the wholesale de-politicization of which hyper-suburbanism is a part. Rather than bring his readers "home from nowhere," he has left them stranded—and painted himself into a corner.

◀ **Daniel Lazare** is author of *The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution Is Paralyzing Democracy* (Harcourt Brace). He is currently at work on a book about capitalism, class and de-urbanization.

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In the years immediately following World War II, America witnessed a curious paradox developing in higher education. While the GI Bill offered unprecedented opportunity to many thousands and the government financed a vast improvement and expansion of all sectors of the school system, few Americans—from politicians and scholars to artists and workers—managed to escape the increasingly icy climate of conformity. New programs were accompanied by new strictures, and seemingly benevolent expansion was often really part of an obsessive political program to contain the communist threat.

In *The Cold War and the University*, nine academics from different fields look at the troubling impact the Cold War has had on their disciplines and on the country's intellectual life. Harvard biologist R.C. Lewontin provides the context, describing the postwar boom in federally funded university research. Others tell their own stories: Ray Siever describes the expansion of the earth sciences; Ira Katznelson traces the trajectory of postwar political science; Richard Ohmann examines the development of English and literature; and Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Immanuel Wallerstein and Laura Nader recall the turmoil in the humanities. Though their perspectives and experiences differ, all can attest that fattening up the intelligentsia at home was a fundamental part of fighting the Cold War abroad.

During the war, the scramble to develop atomic weapons put a premium on university research, prompting a new relationship between the government and academia. After the war, the preoccupation of American policy-makers with the specter of communism solidified that relationship. In 1952, nearly 90 percent of all federal funds for university research came from either the Defense Department or the Atomic Energy Commission. In return, the higher-education establishment went to great lengths to clamp down on dissent. The American Association of Universities openly called for "loyalty to the ideal of learning, to the moral code, to the

country and to its form of government." As if that weren't clear enough, the statement added, "Free enterprise is as essential to intellectual as to economic progress."

Although the biggest mobilization of anti-communist might went into the hard sciences, few disciplines came out unscathed. The CIA funded the American Political Science Association, while the military supported linguistics and foreign-language instruction. University of California-Berkeley anthropologist Laura Nader explains how fellowships were diverted from scholars doing traditional fieldwork in tribal areas toward those working on "hot" regions, such as India, where communism was seen as a more immediate threat. A number of Nader's colleagues, for instance, were involved in a government-sponsored counterinsurgency effort in Thailand.

In an essay on the emerging field of "area studies," Immanuel Wallerstein shows how the Cold War not only reshaped existing disciplines but created new ones. In the case of area studies, a pool of talented regional specialists ensured that no geostrategic policy aim need go unresearched. This collaboration often produced appalling results, such as Operation Camelot, a joint project of American University and the U.S. Army. Begun in 1964, Camelot's aim was essentially to study counterinsurgency techniques through the glib method of "social conflict theory."

Yet it would be misleading to say that the state single-handedly engineered this pragmatic approach, as other essays in the collection show. Among historians, Howard Zinn points out, the Cold War's baleful effects were not so much a consequence of government infiltration as of a delusional sense of objectivity. In the '60s, with historians like Arthur Schlesinger Jr. moonlighting as political consultants and scholarship dominated by Leopold von Ranke's just-the-facts historicism, historians' posture of neutrality became a handicap in making sense of turbulent times. "Unless it were simply defined as honesty, objectivity was neither possible nor desirable," Zinn writes.

Most of the essays in the book depict American academics struggling in one way or another against the strictures of the Cold War. But is it possible that they were actually benefiting from it? This is Lewontin's argument. By funding more and more university research, the government essentially gave professors and faculty members more leverage, leading to higher salaries, fewer teaching requirements and, for the lucky few, life-long employment at elite institutions. The bottom line: "In seeking and expending research funds, academics are acting as independent entrepreneurs."

Whether or not one accepts the identification of academics as "entrepreneurs," the book's main point is indisputable. While scientists and researchers have always liked to see their vocation as something pure and aloof from Washington's web, it is increasingly difficult to sustain this position when the goals of one's research dovetail with those of the Pentagon and one's department is working hand in hand with the Office of Strategic Services.

Tim Duggan is a freelance writer based in New York.

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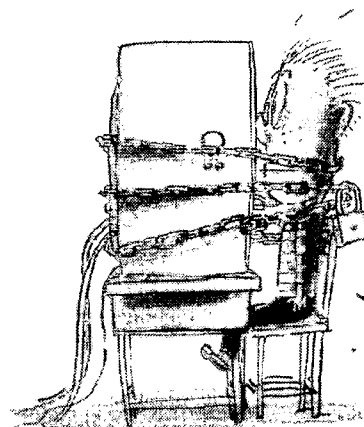
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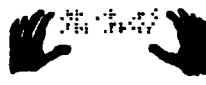
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Continued from page 40

chain, eat it off a table covered in advertising—and, when you go to the washroom, read up on the newest offerings in pizza, beer, perfume and cars from the displays advertisers have lodged over urinals and on the doors of toilet stalls. Other advertisers have proposed furnishing student hang-outs with TV monitors playing continuous commercials. The York project, however, is the first to invite advertisers to expand beyond the crowded environs of student bodily functions and into the classroom.

For critics like York history professor David Noble, it marks the beginning of a frightening new era, when advertising dollars will determine what courses get taught. "This selling of the courses really gets at the guts of the university," he says. "It brings whoring to another level."

Peter Such, the college's director of multimedia learning, says he understands that corporate logos on courses "might seem a little close to home," but he claims he was surprised that the scheme has got the knickers of people like Noble in such a knot.

"I was rocked," says Such of the fuss the letter caused. The donors, he explains, will have their name on course materials in much the same way that public television programs are "brought to you by" corporate sponsors. They won't have any influence on course content, nor will they be able to make up their own courses.

"When people donate money to the university, it lets them put their names on buildings. Distance education has no buildings, so we thought: 'Why not the course?'" says Such.

As far as he's concerned, the plan will benefit students by making university education more accessible. "If some big corporation wants to invest and if it means someone gets an education, why not?" he asks. "The more money I get out of them, the better."

But Noble says that such denials are based on a disingenuously simplistic understanding of how influence works. Regardless of what university administrators say, allowing private interests to pay for content does give them power. It's unlikely that a business will foot the bill for a course it doesn't agree with. "In my courses, I talk about class relations, scientific racism, the exclusion of women from science and technology and how that happened," he says. "I'm not going to get corporate sponsorship."

Stephen Johnson, who just finished his term as president of the University of Toronto Graduate Students Union, pooh-poohs Nobles' fear of self-censorship, asserting that scholars already self-censor as a matter of course; the addition of corporate logos to class materials won't make any significant difference.

"We have this fantasy of the academy as this bastion of free thought—bullshit!" he says. "Some profs are the biggest defenders of the status quo you can meet."

Other students are not quite so sanguine about the prospect of corporate sallies into the university.

"For the university to say that there won't be any influence by corporations is nonsense. It will affect academic

freedom, and it will affect the quality and independence of the university," student council President Wayne Poirier told the York student newspaper.

As universities continue to follow the corporate buck, they're facing a backlash from their increasingly cranky "customers." At the University of Toronto, the washroom ads (a.k.a. "toilet teasers") provoked some renegades to form the "Escher Appreciation Society." The club, led by two students calling themselves "Iguana" and "Sea Urchin," is devoted to removing the ads from their frames and replacing them with prints of works by the Dutch artist M.C. Escher. Other rebels scribble over the ads with marker and fill the ad frames' screw holes with glue.

Of course, paid sponsorship need not mean big money. With a selling price as cheap as \$7,000, opportunities at York aren't limited to big business. In fact, one of the first organizations to express interest in the York project was the Canadian Co-Operative Association—hardly a bastion of right-wing ideology. Unfortunately, the association has now pulled out, which brings up another point: Two months after York put the offer on the table, they have yet to make a deal. "We have no sponsors yet for any of our courses," admits Such. Like many of its Gen-X graduates, York is finding that the question is not so much whether you sell out as whether you can find anyone to buy you. ◀

Nicole Nolan is a freelance writer based in Toronto. Her last article for *In These Times*, "Bitter Medicine," appeared in the January 20, 1997, issue.

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This class brought to you by ...

By Nicole Nolan

OK, kids, it's time to sign up for fall-semester courses. There are a lot of enticing prospects on offer this term. Which will you pick? There's the General Electric course on Nuclear Proliferation, or the Exxon lectures in Marine Ecosystems. (Please note that the Union Carbide seminar in Environmental Management is a required prerequisite for the latter!) And all you budding feminists out there can't afford to overlook Women's Studies 101, brought to you in part by a generous grant from the Playboy Foundation.

It sounds like a comically far-out portrait of corporate-sponsored education. But, as of January, students and faculty at York University in Toronto aren't chortling quite as hard as the rest of us. In the interest of moving "confidently into the 21st century," York's school of part-time studies, Atkinson College, now offers degree-credit courses that can be taken entirely on the Internet. The courses, however, are costly to design, so Atkinson's deans have decided to offer a, er, unique opportunity to corporate donors: the chance to put their company logos on reading materials found at the course's Web site.

"For a gift of \$10,000 (Canadian)," a fundraising letter to alumni reads, "you or your corporation can become the official sponsor for the development and design of one of our new multimedia, high-tech courses, which will bear your name or company logo for as long as that course, or a version of it, is offered by Atkinson (two to three times a year)."

Predictably enough, the offer has scandalized some university denizens, who accuse York of compromising its academic integrity in pursuit of corporate dollars. But outrageous as the Atkinson offer may seem, it is really just the latest chapter in the story of Canadian universities' increasing dependence on the private sector. Canada's post-secondary education system is entirely state-run. Governments pay most of the cost of student tuition, and private universities are forbidden in most Canadian provinces. But after the funding heyday of the '60s, governments started cutting university budgets and have been cheerfully hacking away ever since. A decade ago, for instance, the Ontario government spent 8.1 percent of its budget on universities. This year, it will spend 4.9 percent.

This chilly climate has bred some brave new creatures in university administrative offices. As Canada's institutes of



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higher learning scramble to keep their world-class reputations intact, they've acquired a new appreciation for the almighty buck. With the help of sharpshooters from the ever-inventive business world, the stewards of Canada's universities have become skilled at rooting out every marketable part of their schools and selling them off to the highest bidder. So while students and staff ponder how far is too far, the answer from university presidents' offices is often, "Not far enough."

The influence of big business on university research has been a subject of controversy in Canadian schools. As in the United States, science departments have long welcomed "partnerships" with large corporations that donate money in exchange for rights to the research.

But recently, universities have discovered a whole new treasure trove in selling access to their captive "Gen-X" market to advertisers. At York and many other Ontario schools, you can now buy your lunch from a fast-food

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N T H E E N D